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READER

JULIE DOUCET IS DEFINITELY DONE MAKING COMICS

But the comics world is not done talking about her.

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The sharpest political mind in southeastern Michigan belongs a 15-year-old girl named Sadia. She's not old enough to vote, nor is she a citizen—and neither are her parents. Plus she's superbusy. She's got school, and then because, birth order-wise, she sits somewhere in the middle of a gaggle of kids, some of whom have kids of their own, she spends a great deal of time caring for infant nieces and nephews, as she would if she hadn't left Bangladesh for the Banglatown neighborhood of Detroit at the age of eight.

Her entire family—most of the neighborhood, in fact—has been neatly excised from the entire democratic process. Many don't pursue citizenship because even in these particularly trying times for immigrants they don't see much benefit to it. Banglatown—so named for its majority-Bengali population—is a community engaged on every level with the health and happiness of its residents. Yet the neighborhood maintains a deep and abiding political disaffection. Sadia's distinction is her keen awareness of the exact conditions of the disaffection that plagues her neighborhood.

She's not aware, however (and she'll be angry when she finds out): Sadia is the reason I left my idyllic little Banglatown urban farm, right across the street from her house, to take this job. I went back to visit a few days ago, and we grabbed a couple of minutes together. She updated me on her school—her language instructor makes inappropriate sexual comments in class, and her math teacher got mad the other day when Sadia rolled her eyes at an unexpected homework assignment. Her school, like many of the other public schools in Detroit, recently discovered lead in the drinking fountain water, so Sadia began the semester with a school-issued bottle of water. The distribution system for water bottles isn't holding up, though, so now everyone has to drink out of those weird paper cones. Sadia is not a fan.

She asked me how the job is going and I told her it was going great. "I wish we had a newspaper like that here," she said.

Then she jumped to neighborhood news. "Did you know that just the next block over a man was shot in the face?" she asked. "And then a couple of days later a girl down [on her street] was attacked and nearly raped. A Bengali girl!"

I had pored over Detroit papers every day since I left, but had seen no mention of the news. "Really?" I asked.

"Yes," Sadia said solemnly. "She was coming in from her car [when she got attacked] and screamed. Luckily her mother heard her."

"You know," she added, "the police don't come when you call them. Sometimes they come two hours later. Sometimes they don't come at all."

"And no one does anything about it!" she cried, throwing her hands up in the air in frustration. "It's like no one cares about us."

"That's why people here don't vote," she said finally. "It doesn't do any good. Nothing ever changes. No one listens to us."

She's right. During the 2016 presidential election, which in my district was the first election the majority of voters

at my polling place had ever participated in, our votes were simply discarded. The lines were long that day because the city had understaffed translators for the Bengali, Yemeni, and Arabic languages the new voters spoke. And each of the voters, the vast majority of whom were women, also needed to be taught the process of voting. (Apparently it's quite different in Bangladesh.)

So we had a good hour together at the polling place, my new-at-the-time Banglatown neighbors and I. We had pretty much planned out the Hillary Clinton Victory Party by the end of it, testing the limits of the range of vocabulary we shared to plan festivities. The celebration would be halal; I was one of the only non-Muslims in the room.

Our party plans dissipated as election results rolled in. Then it became clear that there had been discrepancies between paper and machine ballots throughout Michigan. Some of those discrepancies were never resolved. The ballots from my polling place were discounted. This news, as far as I could tell, was never translated into Bengali, and thus it's not clear whether my neighbors ever got the full story on why their candidate hadn't won. Nonetheless the message came through loud and clear. Their votes had not counted.

I came back to Chicago because I can't promise things will change for Sadia, or for Banglatown. But I can try to get people to listen. And a particularly important time to listen to disaffected folks is right before the 2018 midterms. If listening's not your thing, we've got a visual essay from movement photographer Sarah-Ji, one of the smartest documenters of local politics Chicago's got. We also have a gripping read (yes!) by Maya Dukmasova on the usually unthinkable mundane vote for Cook County judges, and Julia Hale peeks at the struggle to install a polling place at Cook County Jail.

Our cover image this week is by the Montreal-based illustrator and (former) comics creator Julie Doucet. We've excerpted an interview from my new book on her oeuvre—*Sweet Little Cunt* (Uncivlized Books)—for the issue, which coincides with the release of Drawn & Quarterly's compendium of her work, *Dirty Plotte: The Complete Julie Doucet*. I hope to see you tonight out at Quimby's, where cartoonist John Porcellino and I will discuss her groundbreaking work.

TRiiBE cofounder Morgan Elise Johnson last week won a 40 Game Changers Under 40 award from WVON and Ariel Investments—she and Tiffany Walden contribute an endearing portrait of Cupcake for this issue's Block Beat.

The rest of the year has a few treats in store too. Sao Song, the pop-up restaurant Mike Sula covered last week, has announced some new dates if you were intrigued by the combination of skateboarding and cuisine from Laos. We've posted them online, and will continue to add more as we receive word.

Finally, we here at the *Reader* wish to extend a hearty goodbye and good luck to longtime critic Tony Adler and former staffer Ryan Smith. May they fare well!

—ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

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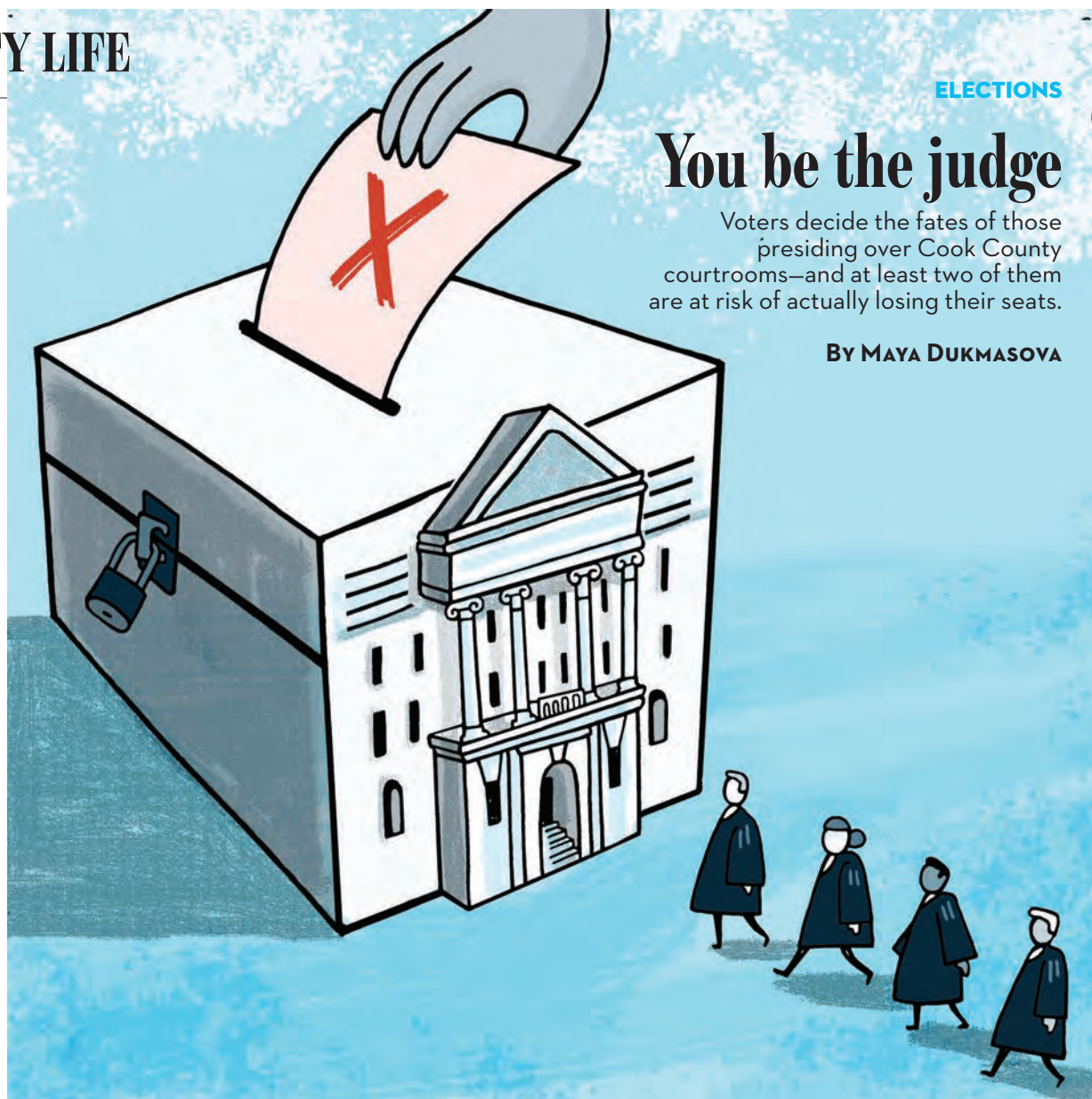
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You be the judge

Voters decide the fates of those presiding over Cook County courtrooms—and at least two of them are at risk of actually losing their seats.

BY MAYA DUKMASOVA



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Twenty-eight years. That's how long it's been since the last time a Cook County judge was voted out of office. This election year, as on every even year when we hit the polls to pick a president or governor, Cook County voters are also asked to vote on 39 candidates trying to join the judiciary for the first time and vote "yes" or "no" to keep another 61 judges already on the bench.

Judicial elections have traditionally garnered little public interest or scrutiny—even though, of all the elected officials on any ballot, it's the judges we're all most likely to come in contact with. You could be the victim of a crime or be accused of one. You could need a divorce. You could wind up in eviction court. You could need to settle an inheritance dispute. Most of these legal issues will require

judges. After a nearly three-decade hiatus, Cook County voters seem poised to remind at least a couple of them—Matthew Coghlan and Maura Slattery Boyle, both 18-year veterans of the bench—that their jobs aren't guaranteed for life.

First, a little background: the Circuit Court of Cook County is the largest unified court system in the country. Every year, in 16 courthouses around the county, 400 judges preside over hundreds of thousands of criminal and civil cases—from murder trials to medical malpractice lawsuits to traffic ticket contestations.

Two-thirds of these judges are elected, either to "countywide" seats (for which voters from all of Cook County get to cast a vote) or to "subcircuit" seats (for which only voters in a particular area of the county get to vote—

think of these as wards or congressional districts, but for judges only). The other third of the judges are appointed by the elected judges, and it's a competitive process. Hundreds of attorneys who've been practicing law for at least six years apply for a handful of appointment slots that become available every other year. A nominating committee of the circuit court's presiding judges (the head judges of every division) pick two candidates for each slot after evaluating their credentials and reviews by various bar associations. The finalists are chosen through a vote by the elected judiciary. These appointed judges—known as associate judges—serve four-year terms and then have to survive a retention vote cast by their colleagues to stay on the bench.

For the two-thirds of the circuit court judges who are elected by the public, the first

hurdle is getting on the ballot—which usually means getting involved in partisan politics.

Judges running for a countywide or subcircuit seat have to gather petition signatures and campaign like any other candidate for elected office. It's hard to run a winning campaign without the support of a political party, and around here, without the support of the Democratic Party in particular. It's why most judges in Cook County are Democrats and why the only seriously contested part of a judicial election is the Democratic primary. This year, just five of the 39 open judicial seats in the county offer a choice between a Democratic and Republican candidate on the November ballot. In the other 34 races, Democratic candidates are running unopposed.

Elected judges serve six-year terms. At the end of a term, the public is asked to vote on whether or not to retain them. This year, there are 59 circuit court judges up for a retention vote. (There's also one state appellate court judge and one state supreme court justice seeking retention.)

Judges up for retention are listed on the ballot by seniority; party affiliations are not indicated. To stay on the bench each judge must garner at least 60 percent "yes" votes. If a judge isn't retained, he or she will serve out the rest of the current term, which ends in early December. Then, the Illinois Supreme Court will appoint someone to fill the vacancy until the next primary and general election deliver a permanent replacement. Judges appointed to fill vacancies (either created by a lost election or by an elected judge's retirement or death) will eventually have to fight for their seats through a primary and general election before they can truly enjoy the benefits of incumbency and the relatively less stressful prospect of retention votes.

Ever since the current circuit court and judicial election system was implemented in Illinois in 1964, most judges have effectively had lifetime appointments. They have negligible name recognition, and have the benefit of various organizations rooting for their retention no matter what—mainly the Cook County Democratic Party and the Committee for Retention of Judges in Cook County (made up of local attorneys and retired Cook County judges), both of which consistently remind the public to just vote "yes" on all the retention candidates. Several bar associations and media organizations compile evaluations of all judges up for retention, but few voters seem to know about these resources. The bar groups recommend most judges for retention anyway.

But this year is unusual. Two circuit court judges have been the targets of particularly intense scrutiny in the run-up to this election and stand a chance of losing their seats. Matthew Coghlan and Maura Slattery Boyle were among just seven judges in the county who received any negative reviews from one or more of the 11 local bar associations that evaluate judges for retention. (For a comprehensive digest of bar associations' recommendations for each judge on the November ballot, see voteforjudges.org.)

Coghlan, who serves in the criminal division, is currently being sued by two exonerated men, Armando Serrano and José Montañez, who claim that as a prosecutor he worked with disgraced Chicago Police detective Reynaldo Guevara to frame them for murder. (Last summer, a federal jury awarded another exonerated man more than \$17 million after finding that Guevara had framed him for a different murder.) Coghlan has also amassed complaints from attorneys, who told the Chicago Council of Lawyers (CCL) that he “can be condescending and otherwise disrespectful toward non-white lawyers and defendants in his courtroom.” After an extensive review, Injustice Watch found that Coghlan recently ran afoul of the Illinois Appellate Court with a ruling on a postconviction petition, and that he's among the harshest sentencers in the county, routinely imposing one-year prison terms for simple marijuana possession convictions.

The Chicago Bar Association and the Illinois State Bar Association—two prominent lawyers' groups that evaluate Cook County judges—have given Coghlan their vote of confidence for retention. But CCL—which is generally seen as the more “progressive” organization—and six additional bar associations rated Coghlan as “not qualified.” What's most likely to seal his fate, however, is an unprecedented move on the part of the Cook County Democratic Party, which dropped its endorsement of Coghlan in September. Voters have been getting robocalls from party chair and Cook County Board president Toni Preckwinkle urging them to boot him off the bench.

“After an independent investigation, the Cook County Democratic Party's retention committee recommended unanimously that he not be retained,” Preckwinkle says in the recorded message. “Please vote to retain all the other qualified judges but vote “no” on Judge Coghlan.”

In the recording, Preckwinkle delivered the “all the other qualified judges” part with particular emphasis. Are voters to interpret the

term “qualified” as a description of all other judges? Or is she implying we should only vote “yes” on judges who are qualified? The ambiguity may be intentional. After all, the party hasn't come out against any other judges who've been under fire from bar groups or the media—ever, as far as anyone can remember.

For example, in its review Injustice Watch found circuit court judge Maura Slattery Boyle to be the county's harshest sentencer—imposing longer prison terms for defendants than the other criminal division judges who handle serious felony cases like the ones that come through her courtroom. She was also found to favor prison terms over probation for less serious crimes. Slattery Boyle has also had more decisions overturned by the appellate court than any other of the six criminal division judges seeking retention this year—almost as many as the other five judges combined. Here too, cases involving Detective Guevara loom large. When the two men who are now suing Coghlan were appealing their conviction in 2013, Slattery Boyle discounted their evidence of Guevara's misconduct and was later chastised by the appellate court, which took the case out of her hands. The higher court noted that Slattery Boyle “gave the impression that [she] was flatly unwilling to consider the evidence offered by [Serrano].”

While CCL and two other groups didn't recommend her for retention this year, the Cook County Democrats are sticking by her.

Scrutiny of Coghlan and Slattery Boyle notwithstanding, if history is any indication, they still stand a good chance of keeping their jobs. Negative rankings by bar groups, rare as they are, have mattered little to voters in the past. There's a stronger force at play in judges' favor—the ethnic politicking that continues to animate local elections. In a 2004 *Reader* feature on a circuit court judge who kept getting reelected despite documented abuses of power and disavowals by bar associations, Steve Bogira noted:

“In judicial elections Cook County voters have long marked their ballots as if they were choosing the Saint Patrick's Day parade committee. Their clear preference for O'Judges and McJudges has occasionally led judicial candidates to adopt Irish aliases for the ballot. . . . In retention elections the *NR*—not recommended—after a candidate's name on the bar group flyers hurts, but not as much as the *Mc* at the front of the name on the ballot helps.”

The tendency to support incumbency has also been heavily bolstered by the Committee for Retention of Judges in Cook County,

a group created in the wake of the judicial corruption scandal exposed by Operation Greylord in the 1980s, when 17 Cook County judges were indicted (and 15 convicted) for taking bribes, racketeering, and other federal crimes. On its face the group is nonpartisan, but much of its funds are funneled to the Cook County Democratic Party to campaign in support of judges. Since 1984, the committee has urged voters to vote “yes” to retain all judges, regardless of their evaluations. Though some of their lawn signs continue to spread this message around the county, in recent years the committee has made efforts to appear a little less brazen.

“We don't make specific recommendations,” explains committee cochair (and former judge) Marvin Leavitt, a family law and divorce attorney. “We say: vote for qualified judges.”

But they don't say not to vote for unqualified judges. Leavitt says that's because ultimately, what “qualified” means isn't for the committee to decide. “The position we take is, you take your position and we endorse qualified judges,” he says. This position extends even to Coghlan. “If you found him qualified, you'll vote for him, if you found him not qualified, you don't vote for him.”

Which raises the question—are the bar association rankings (which ultimately amount to lawyers' rather than litigants' or defendants' perspectives on judges), party endorsements, and blanket approval of anyone found qualified for apparently any reason really the best we can do to help us figure out how to vote on the seats that, arguably, have the greatest impact on our daily lives? Shouldn't there be a more systematic and objective way to judge who's a good judge?

Unsurprisingly, there is. Just not in Illinois. More than a dozen states have judicial performance commissions that periodically evaluate judges' performance throughout their time in office. These commissions offer feedback for judges to improve before they, say, enter into a pattern of misinterpreting the law or veer far from sentencing norms; they also offer praise for judges doing a good job.

“The fact that we only evaluate judges every six years means a judge can move into a new assignment that he or she cannot grasp and suddenly for the next year or more litigants are suffering,” explains Malcolm Rich, the director of the Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice, a nonprofit research and advocacy group working to promote equity in the courts.

Rich says it shouldn't be that judges are

evaluated less frequently on their job than employees in any other workplace, especially since they have considerable power to decide the trajectory of people's lives. “Retention elections can focus on judges who are doing the worst job, but there are many other judges that could be doing a bad job, and we should be paying attention to them as well.” Rich added that there are plenty of good judges in Cook County who deserve praise for their performance.

A judicial evaluation system not tied to the election cycle would allow us to take better stock of the judiciary on all fronts, and Appleseed is currently working on a proposal to establish one in Illinois. In the meantime, we've got to make do with the system we have. This system relies heavily on voter self-education about the candidates and actually casting that ballot—no matter how tedious it might feel.

Some voters already find that second part a challenge. According to Chicago Board of Elections spokesman Jim Allen, many don't even bother filling out the judicial part of the ballot.

“It's a lot of material for voters to wade through,” Allen says. He encourages people who are voting in person to bring a cheat sheet to help them make their decisions, particularly on the dozens and dozens of judicial candidates. “I can't memorize the ballot, and I'm pretty close to the process,” he says. “And no one I know who works at this agency has the ballot memorized. We all bring notes to the polling place, and we encourage voters to do that.”

Allen adds that we shouldn't think of the judicial part of the ballot as less interesting. It behooves voters to research the candidates. “You're more likely to come in contact with judges than any of the other officials on that ballot,” he says. And the judges' impact on the entire county compounds quickly. “The election itself, if there's a close election contest, where does it go? In front of a judge,” Allen says.

Rich is optimistic that this attitude is catching on.

“I am seeing more interest than ever in these judicial elections, particularly among younger people,” he says. “I think people are now understanding how important judges are and how dangerous it will be if we don't have an independent and quality judiciary.” He thinks the drama around Brett Kavanaugh's appointment to the Supreme Court has helped people see judges in general in a whole new light. “It's dawning on people that the Circuit Court of Cook County makes incredibly important decisions.” 

 @mdoukmas

TRANSPORTATION

How not to be ‘that dude’

Tips for men who want to make walking, biking, and transit a little less crummy for women

By JOHN GREENFIELD



Don't cut in front of a woman waiting at a light just because you assume you're faster than she is—that's "man-shoaling." 📷 JOHN GREENFIELD

In the midst of the #MeToo movement and the wake of the Kavanaugh confirmation, many well-meaning guys have been analyzing past decisions. Some of us have been wondering if there were times when we could have better supported the women in our lives or done more to put an end to the harmful behavior of other men.

Since my field is transportation, I recently asked several female friends, colleagues, and anti-harassment activists to share tips for men who might like to avoid being a jerk, or even become an ally, when sharing public space on foot, on transit, and on bicycle. Dozens of women and gender-nonconforming folks took part in the conversation via a Facebook discussion and individual interviews.

Librarian Anita Mechler summed up the golden rule for men who want to avoid causing hassles for women and nonbinary folks who are simply trying to get where they need to go: “Try to be mindful of how you take up space, physically, verbally, and mentally.”

Participants brought up a host of issues that folks with masculine privilege generally don't have to worry about, from catcalling to sexual assault. Design professional Marie Walz called these challenges “a women's experience in a patriarchal world,” one that may be invisible to men, but surely isn't to the women and nonbinary people in their lives.

Take walking home at night, for example. While all Chicagoans have concerns about crime, some women told me they feel wary of any man they encounter on a darkened street. “You can hurt us,” said architecture and design writer Anjulie Rao. “Easily, quickly. We know this. So don't be surprised when we move away from you, or walk on the other side of the street. It's never unreasonable.”

Other women suggested that men try to avoid walking less than half a block away from a woman walking alone at night if they're traveling at the same speed. If it's necessary to pass her, they said, the guy should leave as much space as possible between them, perhaps saying a quiet “excuse me” as he passes.

It could be that most men wouldn't think of making unsolicited sexual comments toward or otherwise intentionally harass a woman walking alone or on a CTA bus or el car. But would they intervene when they see it happen?

“I would kill to see a man shut another man down for catcalling,” said Hope Nathan, who works in the film industry. “If it's one of your friends, for the love of Mike, check him.”

SlutWalk Chicago, part of an international movement “working to challenge mindsets and stereotypes of victim-blaming and slut-shaming,” provided a statement with advice on what folks with masculine privilege should do if they witness harassment, including getting the woman and yourself to a safe place if there seems to be a risk of violence. On the other hand, they said, “Be aware of how you approach her as well. This doesn't need to be dramatic, so you don't need to make a scene either—it's an embarrassing moment.”

Similarly, law student Ezra Lintner, who identifies as genderqueer, said it's important to follow the lead of the person who is being catcalled. “I've made the mistake of being confrontational when the women I was with just wanted to keep walking. . . . A simple ‘Ugh, should we deal with this or keep walking?’ is enough.”

When it comes to riding transit, partici-

pants had a wealth of pointers to avoid being “that dude” on the train or bus. The scourge of manspreading—men sitting with legs akimbo, encroaching on the personal space of other riders—is well documented. It's especially problematic on the CTA's newer 5000 series cars, prevalent on the Red Line, which mostly feature aisle-facing bench seating.

Walz brought up a related “don't” for masculine folks on those type of rail cars. When straphanging, “please turn facing the front or the back of the train, so that people don't have to have your package right in front of their faces.”

Other transit-oriented requests for men included removing backpacks while standing so they don't wind up in people's faces, avoiding blocking doors, and not leaning against support poles, so that others can use them as hand grips. Respondents also asked that men volunteer to help moms with strollers and elderly people getting on and off buses and trains, and be sure to offer their seats to pregnant ladies. “I kept a log of how many times I was offered seats during my first pregnancy, and it was seriously six times,” marketing professional Rebecca Resman noted.

Walz had some further advice: “If a woman has headphones on, she doesn't want to talk to anyone unless the train is literally on fire.”

Assistant horticulturalist Yaritza Guillen told me that bike commuting has turned out to be a good solution for avoiding the hassles and indignities she regularly faces while walking or riding the CTA. “I don't have to deal with strange men in my space, creepily talking to me about nonsense.”

But that doesn't mean bikeways are free of sexism. Take, for example, the phenomenon of “bike mansplaining,” in which men

assume women are ignorant about bike setup or repair and offer unsolicited, sometimes insulting, advice, or assistance.

For example, Danielle McKinnie, a technical trainer at a hospital, recalled attending a seminar on biking to work where the male presenter asked the audience members if they knew how to fix a flat. “I raised my hand. He said, ‘You—you know how to change a bike tire?’”

Yasmeen Schuller, owner of the local social networking site the Chainlink, noted that “not all women like being considered a damsel in distress” when they have a mechanical issue. She suggested that men who encounter women and nonbinary people with bike problems might ask if they have everything they need to fix them, rather than assuming that they need rescuing.

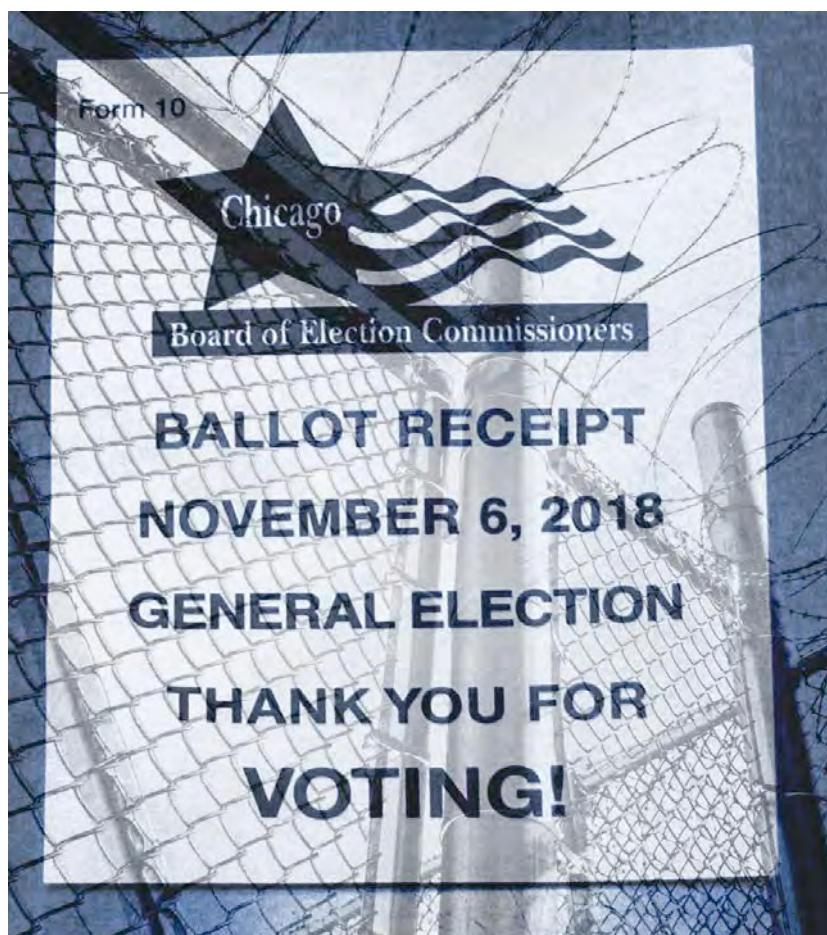
Bikesplaining even happens to professional bike mechanics like Mary Randall, who's also a serious racer. In addition, she reports that during “literally every solo road ride” she goes on in the region, random men will attempt to “draft” her (ride close behind to cut wind resistance) without asking permission. “So you have this hulking stranger riding two inches behind you, and you have no idea who they are or if they can ride well enough to be that close to you safely.”

How does she deal with that deeply creepy situation? “I just pull over and stop for a few minutes and let them go,” Randall said. “Sometimes I say something like, ‘If you can't introduce yourself, get off my fucking wheel.’ Sometimes I just blow snot rockets with reckless abandon.”

A number of women spoke out against “man-shoaling,” which refers to a guy cutting in front of a woman at a light under the assumption that when the light turns green he's going to pass her anyway. “Man-shoaling is obnoxious and insulting,” Resman said. “Tip for men: Don't fucking do that.”

But women also said that men don't need to walk on eggshells when interacting with them in public space. Some maintained that it's actually fine for men to strike up conversation, as long as they keep things brief and are mindful of nonverbal cues. As racer Mary Reynolds puts it, just “consider how much space you're taking up, and how that might be affecting the people around you.” 📷

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📷 @greenfieldjohn



ELECTIONS

Prisoners count too

A legislative effort to allow Illinois inmates to exercise their right to vote continues despite Governor Rauner's veto of the bill.

By JULIA HALE

Illinois House Bill 4469 is an initiative that, if passed, would affect inmates throughout the state. Drafted this past January with an implementation date of 2020, the bill consists of three major parts. It would turn Cook County Jail into an official polling location, would implement election processes at every jail in Illinois, and would provide “Know Your Rights” guides and voter registration forms to inmates upon release. This year the bill was passed in the Illinois General Assembly, but Governor Bruce Rauner has refused to sign it without an amendatory veto of its third provision.

Drafted in coalition with Chicago Votes, ACLU Illinois, the Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law, and other local organizations, the bill seeks to make voting easier

for inmates in Illinois, where there are four million people with a past felony conviction and 20,000 in pretrial detention, all of whom are eligible.

Michelle Mbekeani-Wiley, formerly a staff attorney at the Shriver Center, was the head of the legislative draft committee. She'd written an article for the *Chicago Reporter* about the lack of awareness that convicts and prisoners are entitled to vote. She says the idea for the bill “really came from Representative Juliana Stratton. She approached me about wanting to work together to address voting in jail.”

Khadine Bennett is the director of advocacy and intergovernmental affairs for ACLU Illinois. She and Mbekeani-Wiley worked with groups including Chicago Votes, Illinois PIRG, and the League of Women Voters to ini-

tiate the process. Then they brought the Cook County Board of Elections in. “To see where the interest was,” she says.

“We then decided there are three things we need to do,” Bennett continues. “One, we need to have language, and then once we have a bill we need to get it through the general assembly.” The last of their goals was to create guides for inmates being released from facilities that would explain their voting rights.

“A lot of people think we're like Florida,” says Bennett. “Most folks don't know that they have the ability to vote after they've been to prison or jail or been arrested.”

The initiative was divided into three groups; a bill drafting group, a lobbying group, and a publication team that created the content for the inmate voting rights guides. According to Bennett, however, everyone was involved in anything they wanted to be. “It was all a group effort,” she says.

Mbekeani-Wiley agrees. In addition to heading the legislative draft committee, she says, “I also lobbied with Khadine for the bill in Springfield.” She and Bennett spent nearly every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from January to the end of May pitching their plan and negotiating with the opposition “whenever the general assembly was in session, basically,” Mbekeani-Wiley says.

Bennett was also heavily involved in creating the “Know Your Rights” guides, a process led by the ACLU.

“One of the things that [the ACLU] felt we could add value to was letting people know that they had rights,” Bennett says.

Local organization Chicago Votes has led the implementation process, coordinating in-person initiatives at Cook County Jail that educate and advocate for inmates since fall 2017.

Cook County Jail admits about 100,000 people annually, and about 90 percent of those incarcerated at Cook County Jail have the right to vote. Jen Dean, Chicago Votes' deputy director, has been facilitating election processes there this election season. Saturday, October 27, was “our second in-person voting day,” she says.

“We're facilitating between the sheriff's department and Board of Elections,” Dean says. “It involves some hand-holding. The sheriff's department doesn't always understand all of the election processes, so we walk them through all of that.”

At Cook County Jail, inmates are currently

voting using the absentee ballot system and nonelectric privacy booths. “When [Cook County] does become a polling location, we will be able to have voting machines,” says Dean. For now, the jail is the only one in Illinois that's actively implementing an election process at all.

Although HB 4469 passed in both houses, Governor Rauner indicated he would only sign the bill with an amendatory veto that eliminated the distribution of “Know Your Rights” guides and voter registration forms to inmates upon release.

“One of the frustrations about the veto is that we worked pretty hard to figure out a process that would work,” Bennett says. There's already a process for giving inmates reentry packets for their transitions back into society. “It was just a matter of handing out two [more] pieces of paper,” she says. “We were willing to prepare and pay for the materials.”

It seemed like a simple, elegant solution: give people information they require as they left the facility. “It was really disappointing that he chose to get rid of that part of it,” says Bennett. “It's surprising and troubling that he chose to veto it. Getting people information about their voting rights is something that all people in Illinois should want.”

Mbekeani-Wiley chalks the decision up to partisan politics. “I think that it's a very partisan issue, to be honest,” she said. “I think that [the governor] may not believe that it's in his best interest to let criminals of the state know that they have the right to vote. I think he doesn't view that population of individuals as worthy of knowing their right to vote.”

Dean too sees the clear violation of rights that exists in prison election processes. “Voting in jail is [a] perfect example of voting barriers and voting suppression,” she said.

While the bill is currently at a standstill, Mbekeani-Wiley remains positive that we may see voting machines in Cook County Jail by 2020. “It is something that takes time to organize, and I think we heavily rely on organizations like Chicago Votes to implement initiatives.”

Bennett has a similar outlook, and is confident that everyone involved shares her commitment to the issue: “It was important to all of us. It's not just something we're going to let die.”

[@huliahale](#)

PHOTO FEATURE

A Visual Voter's Guide

These images from Chicago protests over the last two years will spur you toward the ballot box.

By SARAH-JI



CPS high school students and supporters of #NoCopAcademy hold a “die-in” at City Hall in March 2017. The cardboard tombstones bear the names of people who’ve been killed by Chicago police and those of the schools and mental health clinics closed by Mayor Rahm Emanuel during his first term.

A 2016 march on the south side in honor of all black lives taken by state violence. Organizers Assata’s Daughters and other demonstrators called for the abolition of prisons and police and the reallocation of funds into communities and basic amenities such as jobs, schools, health care, mental health clinics, and access to healthy food.



Members of the Chicago Teachers Union hold a banner in solidarity with workers at the annual May Day march at Union Park, May 1, 2017.



Local artist Jamila Woods sings “Holy,” her healing anthem for black women, in Douglas Park during a July protest. Members of A Long Walk Home’s arts program for black girls gather around what they’ve dubbed “Rekia’s Tree,” in remembrance of Rekia Boyd, who was killed by Chicago police officer Dante Servin in the park six years ago. The girls were participating in a one-day public art program called the Visibility Project, which incorporated visual arts and performances for and by black women, girls, and femmes.



On May 1, 2017, the Resist Reimagine Rebuild Coalition organized a May Day march to draw the connections between racial justice and economic justice. Protesters gathered at Roosevelt and Ogden, between the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and Chicago’s FBI headquarters.

Thousands flooded the Loop for the #TransUpFront protest on March 3, 2017. The event was organized by a newly formed group called the Trans Liberation Collective.



CPS high school organizers with #NoCopAcademy dance and chant outside City Hall after the March die-in.



Chicago police officers and protesters march on opposite sides of the train tracks that run down the middle of 71st Street on July 16, 2018. Two days prior, a white police officer shot and killed South Shore resident Harith "Snoop" Augustus two blocks from the 71st Street barber shop where he worked. Black Lives Matter Chicago, the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression, and other community organizations rallied to call for justice for Harith, condemn CPD's violent policing and criminalization of black communities, and demand community control of the police through a new Civilian Police Accountability Council.

A coalition organized by the Trans Liberation Collective disrupts the Chicago Pride parade on June 25, 2017. Protesters denounced the violence of police against LGBTQIA communities, and called attention to the "ever-increasing corporatization, whitewashing, gentrification, racism, and cisnormativity that have infused Pride for decades."

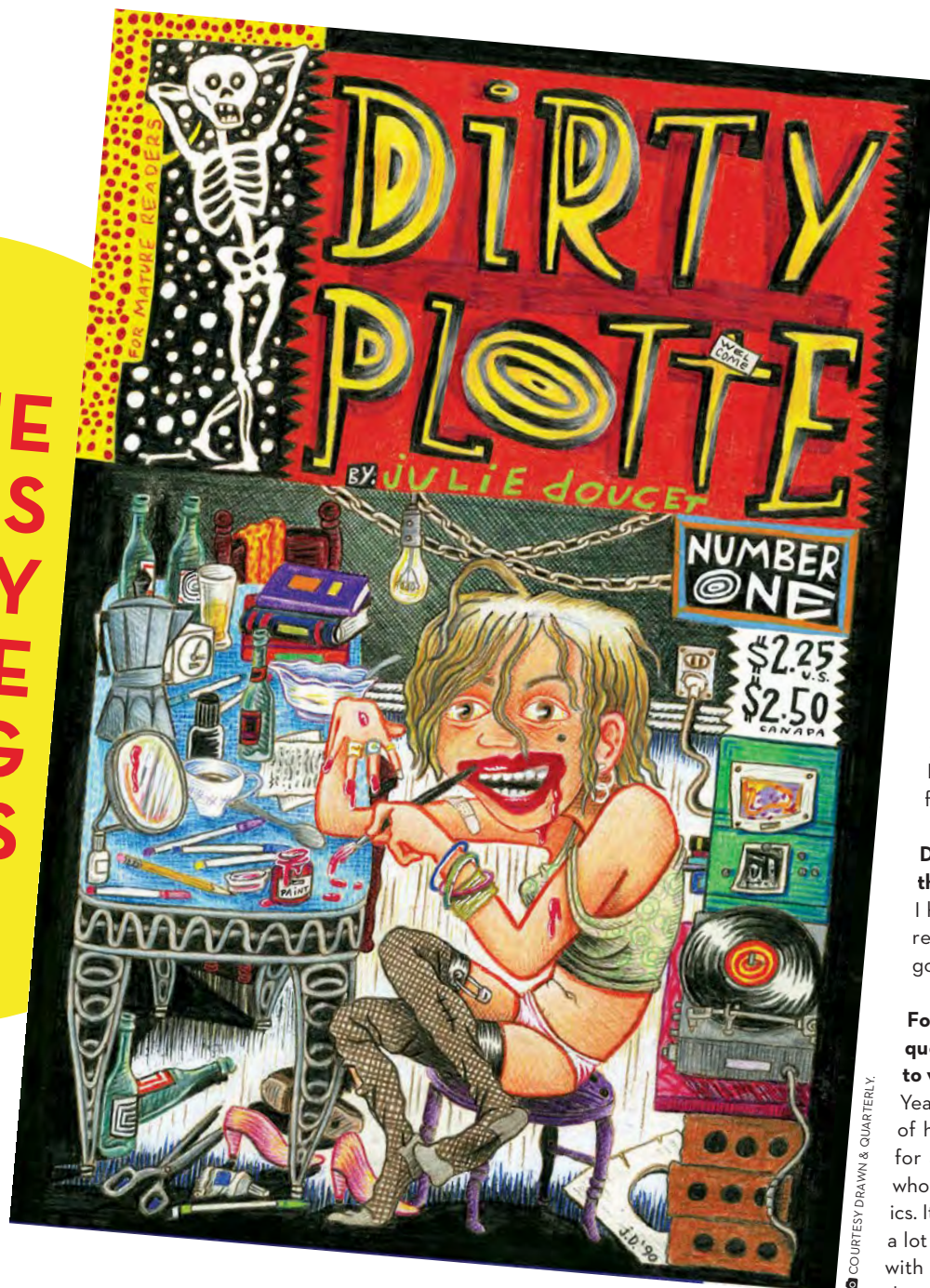


Members of #EndMoneyBail rally outside the Thompson Center on September 18, 2018. Their banner, made of seed packets, bears the names of every person currently being held in Cook County Jail due to lack of funds. Each seed packet was filled with a bee-sustaining seed mix that symbolizes the potential of each incarcerated person's life to give back to their communities.



JULIE DOUCET IS DEFINITELY DONE MAKING COMICS

But the comics world is definitely not done talking about her.
By ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE



Julie Doucet remains one of the most influential artists to come out of the underground comics movement of the 1990s. In her work, especially the comic-book series *Dirty Plotte*, she chronicled the surreal, messy, and often hilarious life and dreams of a semiautobiographical character also named Julie Doucet. The invention/projection allowed the artist to explore the lives of women in a way few comics creators had before. Even though she announced her retirement in 2006, she's never been able to fully escape the comics world: Drawn & Quarterly recently issued a retrospective, *Dirty Plotte: The Complete Julie Doucet*, and now

Anne Elizabeth Moore has published *Sweet Little Cunt*, the first book-length critical examination of her work. (*Doucet* in French is a diminutive of "sweet" while *plotte* is a slang, slightly friendlier term for "cunt.") Doucet, who lives in her native Montreal, spoke with Moore for the book, in an interview that has been excerpted here.

So. You're drawing again.

Yes. But. I don't have any goal. I don't know what to do with that exactly.

I didn't want to draw the same thing I used to, like my comics style, and so I just took anatomy books and tried to retrain myself,

teach myself to draw another way. I sort of succeeded. There are a lot of portraits, from pictures in magazines. But whenever I don't look at pictures like that, I go back to my old style. So it's a fight. It's a battle.

Do you foresee in the future that these two styles might merge?

I hope, but I'm not there yet. And I really, really don't know where it's going. I can't wait to figure it out.

For an artist who publishes so frequently, I imagine it might be hard to work without a deadline.

Yeah. But then again, I'm really tired of having deadlines. And making art for a living. I've been doing that my whole life, since I started to make comics. It really got to me at some point. It's a lot of pressure. You have to come up with some project, to make a book, to always have something to do like that. I just can't take it anymore. [Laughs.] I just wish I could do whatever was going through my mind.

Be a farmer for a little while?

Yeah, or make furniture. I tried to quit at some point, making art, but it didn't work. What I did was I said, "OK, that's enough, it doesn't make sense to me anymore." So I decided to make a fanzine about it.

"Here is my piece about not doing art anymore"?

[Laughs.] Yeah. My friends laughed at me. It was a fanzine in bad German too. *Der Stein*. Apparently it was funny enough. It



could have been just bad, but it was good-bad. I did nine issues, and it was pretty much all about art, and about how art is bad and meaningless now.

Then at the end you put on an exhibition?
I did a small exhibition at the Goethe-Institut here in Montreal.

You said you feel like you've been working on deadline since you started making comics, but you started making comics right out of junior college, is that right?

Let's say I started when I was at university. OK, maybe the first pages were in junior college because when I was studying, I think that year, they created a comics course. But

it was not really about drawing comics, it was more about the theory of comics.

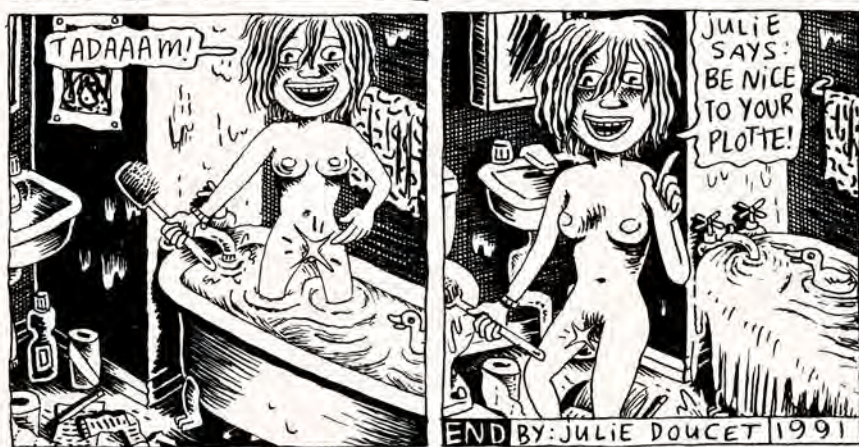
Oh, is there a theory of comics?

More or less. The woman who was teaching that course—for some reason, a woman! Which, I mean, at that time . . . she didn't seem to have that much of a theory. But I

think that first course was their laboratory to figure out the class.

Did anything stay with you from that course, good or bad?

The course was taking a very mainstream direction—French mainstream, so lots of science fiction—



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Preferable to the American mainstream, for sure.

Yeah. But this girl who was in the course, on the first day, she just raised her hand and said, “OK, no, but there is this and that and that and that that exist. Let’s look into that.” And the course was complicated then. She really had a . . . I mean, I discovered work I had never known existed, like women cartoonists from France that were doing some pretty rough stuff. Like Chantal Montellier. Supergood drawings. *Ligne claire*. Very cold.

I recently got a . . . There used to be an anthology magazine in France in the 80s, Ah! *Nana*. So I have five issues.

So you walked into a formal education in comics thinking about gender and maybe sexuality, day one.

It wasn’t really about sexuality at all. It really didn’t go in that direction. I remember Chantal Montellier because she was one of a kind. Nothing compares to what she was doing.

I will admit that my knowledge of French comics is hampered, compared to other European scenes. Do you situate yourself in French comics history?

Oh, of course, yes.

And yet the North American/U.S. pull has to be kind of strong.

Well, at the time there was really no way you could get published in France. That’s why L’Association was created. I discovered U.S. underground comics very late, let’s say in 1987. So I started to do that fanzine, *Dirty Plotte*, and I put an ad in *Factsheet Five*, and that’s how it started for me. I ordered a lot of fanzines and I met a lot of people that way. Lots of pen pals. I met John Porcellino that way. I got published in magazines and then, blah blah blah.

I was talking to John, and he remembers writing away for your early issues of *Dirty Plotte*. I was doing fanzines and reading *Factsheet Five* then too, but one of the most important ways that I found new fanzines was through other fanzines. As I look back at some of them now, one thing I’m struck by is how many folks working in similar modes never seemed to come across your work. A lot of the young, really radical women artists I was corresponding with didn’t seem to catch on. I’m not sure if it was linguistic, or if the Americans I wrote



to were just weird about Canada. I feel like I had to go through comics circles to find out about your work, not other women doing awesome shit. Does that seem to fit with your career path?

Yeah. It was a real big boys’ club, comics. And because of comic books, with the readers’ pages, people would be writing to you—to me. And eventually, women started to write to me. But mostly it was men. Eventually it grew to half-and-half, women and men. But it took some time. It was probably ’93, ’94, when I was publishing the women’s letters. Ah! Women!

I was talking to Chris Oliveros yesterday about how significant your work was to the growth of *Drawn & Quarterly*. He came across your fanzines, yes, and wrote to you?

Yes, he wrote to me. At that time, it was *Drawn & Quarterly Magazine*. But by that time I had been published by *Weirdo Magazine*, so maybe that’s where he saw my work? But of course, we were in the same city.

Because of the book with *Drawn & Quarterly* [*Dirty Plotte: The Complete Julie Doucet*, released October 2], I looked at my old diaries from those days, and I was amazed. I mean, I started to do that fanzine, I distributed it, I gave it away to friends who were cartoonists as well, and it was like an explosion. It got popular very, very quickly. I didn’t quite remember that, but it really did. Even in this city. People would be asking me, “Draw a page for my fanzine,” or “Do an illustration for this or that.” So I was superbusy.

Looking back, now, is there any part of you that questions how much you put into it? Or how much you were asking in return?

No. I was selling the fanzine for 25 cents. Everybody was telling me, you can sell that for one dollar, come on! No no, 25 cents. It's funnier, it's nicer, everybody will buy it. It didn't matter to me. Even now, today, when I make my own books and print them and all that, I sell them very cheap. I just want to be read! It doesn't make sense to me to try to . . . art prices. But the thing also is that in Montreal, people don't have money. So you just can't have anything that's just a little bit too expensive.

These ideas both come out of the DIY punk ethos—the idea of keeping prices low to ensure as wide accessibility as possible, and this deliberately anti-capitalist notion of acknowledging that the system sucks so only playing that game as minimally as possible—but is there one or another that you feel more aligned with?

Oh. Both, I guess.

There are ways that your career can be looked at as a rebuke of capitalism.

Oh, that's good. I'm happy to hear that. That was not intended. I'm not someone who is very articulate. So I would have loved to express that more, but it's not my voice. I know it wouldn't work. I know it would just be bad and not—how do you say, not help the cause, but do the opposite.

In an interview for *Carpet Sweeper Tales*, the interviewer asks you about identifying as a feminist.

I'm happy that [people read my work as feminist] but at the time I didn't realize it. As a woman I felt very unfit, I was very self-conscious. I thought I was ugly and I don't dress properly for a woman, I didn't put on makeup, I wasn't wearing a dress. I just felt I was not proper. I was a tomboy. I didn't have the same interest as lots of women around me. So in that sense, what I drew was expressing that in some ways, but also, because I didn't feel like a proper female, I could never ever imagine that another woman could ever relate to what I was drawing and talking about. So in that sense I didn't think it was feminist in the sense that I didn't think it would, that anybody could relate to that. Most of my friends at the time were men, cartoonists, of course, so I didn't really have that feedback that much.

Of course, you know, I was a feminist, but feminism at the time was something else, you know?

What didn't help was that I was distributing my comics in bookstores and record stores, and I went to a bookstore—La Librairie Alternative, something like that, a ➔



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feminist bookstore—and I gave them *Dirty Plotte* to read to tell me if they wanted to sell it, and I came back and they just told me no. No thank you, it's too violent against women. And I thought, OK, this is just not it for me. I don't fit. So I couldn't really identify as a feminist in so many words.

Last time we spoke, over a decade ago, you were quite articulate about how your relationships were affected by your work—negatively. Where are you at on these matters now?

When a woman has more success than her mate, that screws everything up. And since the beginning I was getting a lot of attention. And right away—right away! I had problems in my relationships with men because of that. Jealousy. Competition.

Do you remember any specific incidents?

Yeah. There was a free newspaper at the time here, the *Montreal Mirror*, and I thought, OK, I'm gonna try. That's when I continued from tk

wrote my first comic strip in English. And I told my boyfriend, and I showed him what I was going to do, and he said, Why bother? I mean, there are a bunch of good men cartoonists in town.

Did those moments affect your career?

No, not my career. But relationship-wise, it's been pretty tough.

That is certainly a theme that runs through your work, but the only project that seems to be negatively affected by such tensions is *My New New York Diary* with Michel Gondry.

That's my biggest professional regret. It has nothing to do with my work. It was supposed to be very small in the beginning, just to try out something, but it ended up being so much bigger. It's his film.

Are there any other works that you question, or that you would go about differently now?

The story "My First Time." That got too personal. I had done too much autobiography, at that point. Why tell everything? A few people also told me it made them uncomfortable, and looking at it now, I think: Oh! Why did I do that? You don't put everything in a comic. That was too much. Too many details. And maybe because it was just such a sad story.

You're often described as an autobiographical cartoonist, but it's hard to read more than a fifth of your strips—in terms of num-

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ber of strips, not page count—as autobiography. You did develop all these ways of protecting your privacy, while still letting your character drive narrative. I was surprised to discover that about half your stories are fiction.

People think it's autobiographical because I use my own character to tell stories. But the first part of my work, it was not autobiographical. It's like fantasy. And the dreams, I mean, a dream is a dream. It's not autobiography. It's a made-up world, in a way.

Is there anything you would be interested in going back to, or exploring in another form?

The more wacky stuff, I guess.

What is wacky to you?

The strips about having my period. I mean, I wouldn't do that, but that voice. I wouldn't do autobiography. Never again. Impossible.

How much do you think your work is affected by health issues—your epilepsy?

You know, something like epilepsy, it's part of you, but you don't really live with it every day. And when you have a seizure, at least with me, I don't see it coming. It's like a big void. I'm just not there. So it doesn't really exist in a way. It's not something that I think about all the time. Maybe more when I was younger. When it first started, I was taking four tablets a day. That makes you think about it quite a lot.

And you had mononucleosis while you were working on *My New New York Diary*.

That was special because—it was a burnout, basically. Since I don't really want to draw in the first place, after that I just couldn't draw anymore. And for years. At least seven years.

I've been wondering lately, in the wake of the Harvey Weinstein allegations—

Oh, there have been a few scandals here, as well!

Every day there are more! Someone losing a job over an extensive history of sexual harassment! In comics, of course, too. It's been making me wonder what my career would have been like—or what your career would have been like—if such allegations had been heard and properly responded to years ago.

I didn't suffer from that [directly] so much, I guess it's because I was drawing things that were so sexual and so not what you expect a woman to do. So in some weird way I was respected. I think I impressed the guys because of that, so I think I didn't have a lot of problems that other women had in comics.

Let's talk about your process for the collage work.

For the autobiography [the French-language *Journal*] I had a general idea of what I wanted to say, but I didn't really have the words, so I would have cut out pages from magazines in advance where the vocabulary was either interesting or funny or both, that I knew I could use. I'd be looking for words that could fit in whatever I wanted to say, and sometimes I'd find one that was not quite what I wanted but that would make an accident, that would make something funny or something poetic. But in other cases I would just pick one word and build something around it. For the text it was *Good Housekeeping* and *Better Homes and Gardens*. And the pictures come from fotonovelas.

At some point in the floppies [the black-and-white standard-size pamphlet comic books Doucet published through Drawn & Quarterly from 1991 to 1998], you began printing the work of other people. How much of that decision was to lessen our workload and how much of it was to share your platform with other creators?

Pffft. Yeah, it was too much work. [Laughs.] And at the same time, it was a good occasion to show other peoples' work that was not published as much as me. I mean, John was making *King-Cat Comics* but was not really being published anywhere else at that time. When I was doing the *Dirty Plotte* fanzine, I was putting out a new issue every month. I did 14 issues. At some point, it got to be too much and I decided, OK, from now on, there are going to be other people in the fanzine. But people hated it. So it just went back to being a solo fanzine. I don't know why I tried to do the same thing with the comics.

Well, as a reader, it's jarring to have to jump out of your specific language and universe, which really is unlike anyone else's, and to jump into someone else's. But I also respect it as a creator, that you were willing to share your space with others.

I remember when I did that, I was in Seattle. It was not like in New York. In New York the atmosphere is so competitive so it was not that nice. But in Seattle it was really cool to be around so many cartoonists and have new friends. It was very friendly. I guess probably it was just to share with the other guys.

But complicated, maybe, for a woman in comics to give up space to a man.

Hm.

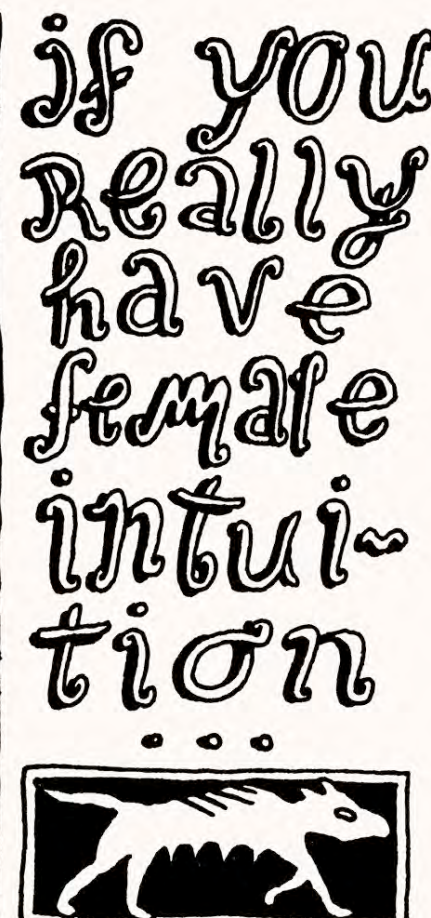
So much of your comics work was about wanting to leave Montreal, and now you are a Montreal-based artist. That's a part of your identity. How do you feel about that?

I am fine with it. But by the time I left in '91 and then when I came back eight years later it was a different planet. It was so different in that sense. It was much better.

Quebec tends to be a little bit more social[ist] than the rest of Canada. I'd go for [seceding] if that party that was going to propose that was true left, but other than that... No, it's never going to happen.

It's just the language, mostly. The culture and the language. It's a tiny bit more socialist, but it's mostly to protect the language. But it's insane, that a lot of Anglo-Quebecois, they speak French. Here in North America? Everybody speaks English everywhere, and still, in Quebec province, people

Charming PERIODS



are learning French. That's amazing.

But for the First Nations, [secession] would be another frontier, and that's not good.

You have to realize that for Quebec, it's very touchy. It's a French-speaking community, all the immigrants speak English. Before we started to have immigrants that spoke French, and had direct contact with immigrant communities from elsewhere.

So what was it about, always wanting to leave this place you obviously have strong feelings for?

The reason why I really, really wanted to leave Montreal in the first place was that everything for me was happening in the States. I would be telling that to people around here, or family or whatever, and they would be looking at me like, "What is she talking about?" So I didn't feel appreciated.

I left because of that but also because, you know, here, life is nice. It's easy, it's cheap. It's not so much anymore, but for a long, long time it was easy to get by and not work so much. And because of that, it makes people kind of flaky. There's not this energy, this emergency to do something, all the time. I really felt like this, a lot of the time. I felt this urgency to do stuff.

Do you still feel that urgency?

When I came back from Berlin, I knew exactly what was waiting for me, and I accepted that, and it was fine. But eventually I met these women [at the printmaking studio] and one of them was very active and a great artist and working hard and working all the time, and her life was just that. Still, today. So that was the one person I was clinging on to. I mean, we were best friends for a long time. But eventually, yeah, I got to meet other people like that.

Are you still involved in the studio?

It closed, and then moved away. It reopened somewhere else, kind of far away. But I don't really have printing projects. Now the clientele has changed quite a lot, and younger and younger and younger. People coming out of school.

I don't know if this is like this everywhere but now, as a cartoonist, you can go to school to learn how to draw comics. So you can get grants, you can get exhibitions, and you have to write an artist's statement. So people coming out of art school, they are domesticated. They are very ambitious as well, so they work hard, but there is this emptiness. Not every one of them. But there is this . . . domestication. No will. You don't

feel the emergency.

You know, I tried to stop making art, but I just couldn't do it. These days where I feel tired, I just can't go on like this, I wish I could do other things. So I say, OK, I quit, and then the next thing you know, I buy another sketchbook! But you don't feel that energy, at least in that crowd.

Sure. Professionalization and domestication—and the ease of Internet publishing without the pressure to live an interesting life from which interesting stories might come—I see it too. Is it strange for you, when you aren't actually involved in the day-to-day of the comics world?

Yeah, it's very strange.

It reminds me that, as it's become known that I'm doing this book, I've had people—urge me to use it to convince you to make more comics, to come back to comics.

Oh, I know. When I said I was quitting comics, nobody believed me. They said, "Oh, she'll be back in two years." But I never came back. Even close friends, cartoonists from Europe, would be like, "In five years you'll be back. You just can't do that. You just can't. It's impossible." It's like being a priest and wanting to quit.

Is there any fight in you to regain that space? Or are you waiting for everyone to catch on to the fact that what you're doing now might be more interesting than comics?

Oh, I gave up on that.

I mean, everyone is going to want to tell you that it's changed, that it's all different now, there are more women, it's all easier. But it's 2017 and I'm still sometimes the only woman in the room at the comics event.

Right now, I have to say, drawing comics to me sounds like something that could be really fun to do. I haven't figured it out, but I have been toying with that idea. Don't tell that to anybody, of course.

But I find the comics audience disappointing, because if you do something a bit too weird, nobody's going to follow you. It has changed quite a lot, and it's better than it used to be, but for that reason, I'm not sure I want to go back to drawing comics. I go back and forth. I shouldn't think that if I draw comics that I can make a living from that, because I know that a lot of people will be disappointed in me. 

 @superanne

LET'S GO

BANANAS



BURRO



CAVENDISH



LADYFINGERS



GROS MICHEL



MANZANO



RED



ORITO



GOLDFINGER



DUCASSE

more about BANANAS

MOST MODERN BANANAS CULTIVATED TODAY ARE PARTHENO CARPIC. THEY ARE STERILE, AND REPRODUCE ASEXUALLY — USUALLY BY TRANSPLANTING PART OF THE STEM.



EACH PLANT IS GENETICALLY IDENTICAL. THEY CAN'T EVOLVE DISEASE RESISTANCE.



GROS MICHEL BANANAS WERE WIDELY CONSUMED IN THE U.S. UNTIL THE 1950s.

BUT A FUNGUS CALLED PANAMA DISEASE DECIMATED GROS MICHEL CROPS.



EVENTUALLY IT WAS REPLACED BY THE CAVENDISH, WHICH IS RESISTANT TO THE STRAIN OF FUNGUS THAT KILLED GROS MICHEL.



THE CAVENDISH IS THE BANANA MOST OF US EAT TODAY.



UNFORTUNATELY, A DIFFERENT STRAIN OF PANAMA DISEASE CALLED "TROPICAL RACE 4" IS DEVASTATING BANANA PLANTATIONS.

THE CAVENDISH MAY ONLY HAVE 5 OR 10 YEARS LEFT.

SCIENTISTS IN HONDURAS HAVE BEEN CROSS-BREEDING BANANA CULTIVARS FOR DECADES.



THEY'VE CREATED CULTIVARS RESISTANT TO PANAMA DISEASE, BUT THEIR FRUIT TASTES TART, LIKE APPLES, AND IS UNLIKELY TO TAKE THE CAVENDISH'S PLACE IN THE U.S. MARKET.



Saint Jane Hotel is praying for Chicago's forgiveness

Should we grant it?

By RYAN SMITH

The Saint Jane Hotel
© EDDIE QUINONES

You can find Gideon Bibles tucked away in the nightstands of most hotel rooms in America, but there's a different kind of testament at Chicago's Saint Jane Hotel. The handsomely polished bedside tables of all 330+ luxury suites are equipped with hardback copies of Louise Knight's 2010 biography *Jane Addams: Spirit in Action*.

No, this isn't the world's most expensive book club. The presence of the 352-page survey of Addams's remarkable life, which traces her evolution from privileged daughter of a politician and mill owner to progressive champion for social justice, is further proof that Saint Jane's owners are paying penance for their sin of appropriation.

A year ago the hotel's owners and copresidents of venture capital firm Becker Ventures—sisters Carrie Meghie and Jill Mast—decided to remodel and rebrand the Hard Rock Hotel as the Saint Jane Hotel in honor of the iconic Chicago suffragist, and did so without consulting anyone at the Hull-House Museum or others tied to her legacy. Furthermore, the optics were cringeworthy: here was an upscale boutique hotel located in a toney section of the Loop in the Carbine and Carbon building on North Michigan Avenue, named after the woman who intentionally built a settlement community in a poor immigrant neighborhood of Chicago.

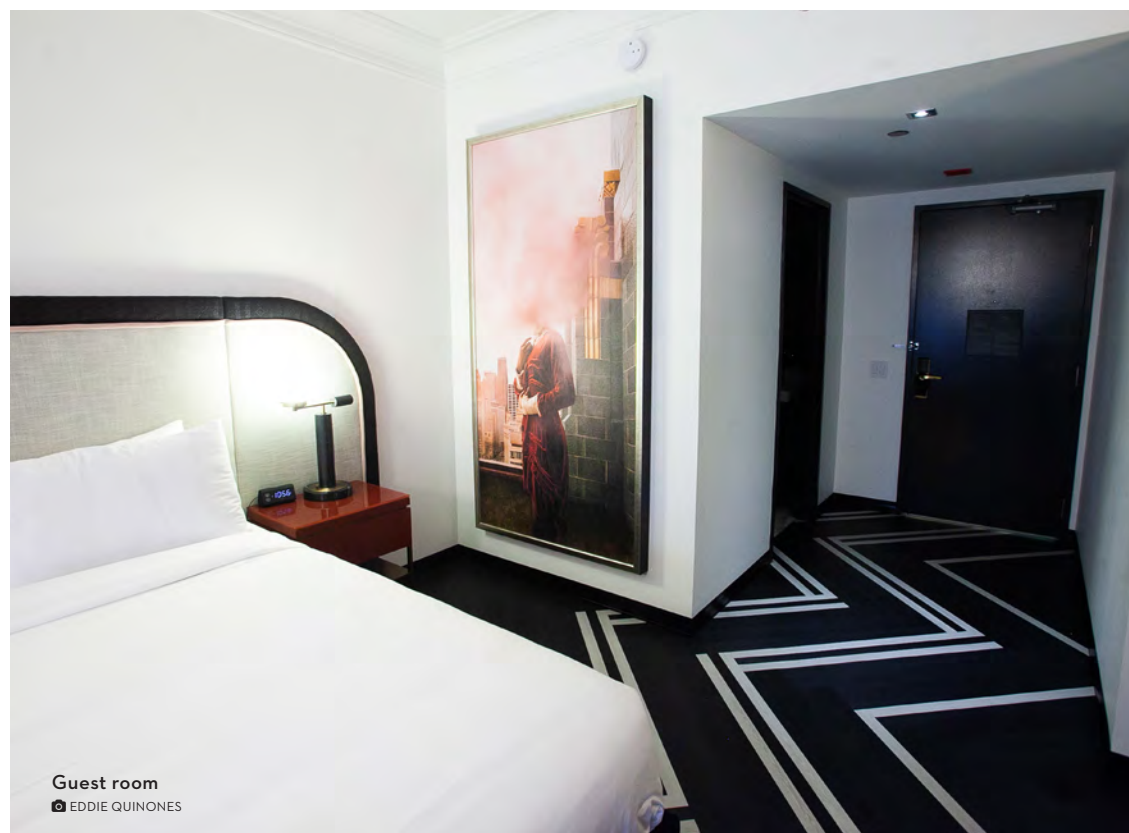
Unsurprisingly, the public backlash was swift and harsh, prompting the hotel's management to embark on a kind of apology tour paired with promises to make the hotel even more Jane Addams-y. Saint Jane Hotel is praying for Chicago's forgiveness. Now that it's officially open for business, should we grant it?

THE CONTROVERSY over the hotel's name has been muted recently, but that's more likely a case of forgetting rather than forgiving. We're living in an age when social-media-fueled outrages burn bright but quickly sputter out to be replaced by the next one.

No one bothered to criticize the hotel when it began accepting reservations in early July—accompanied by a splashy premiere party attended by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and other well-dressed dignitaries. Jennifer Scott, the Hull-House Museum's director, says she's done talking about Saint Jane. Meghie would only answer questions sent to her via e-mail. Chicago media is now covering Saint Jane as if it were any other prominent hotel newly open in the Loop.

That's a drastic change from August, when *Tribune* columnist Robert Reed wrote: “leveraging off the reputation of a local historical icon, especially Addams, is a tricky and controversial proposition. So far, the St. Jane Chicago plan is off to a rocky start.” *Chicago* magazine's criticism was much more pointed: “Jane Addams is not your brand, bro,” wrote Anjulie Rao. Rao speculated that Addams was “rolling in her grave” because her name was being used to hawk fancy hotel rooms.

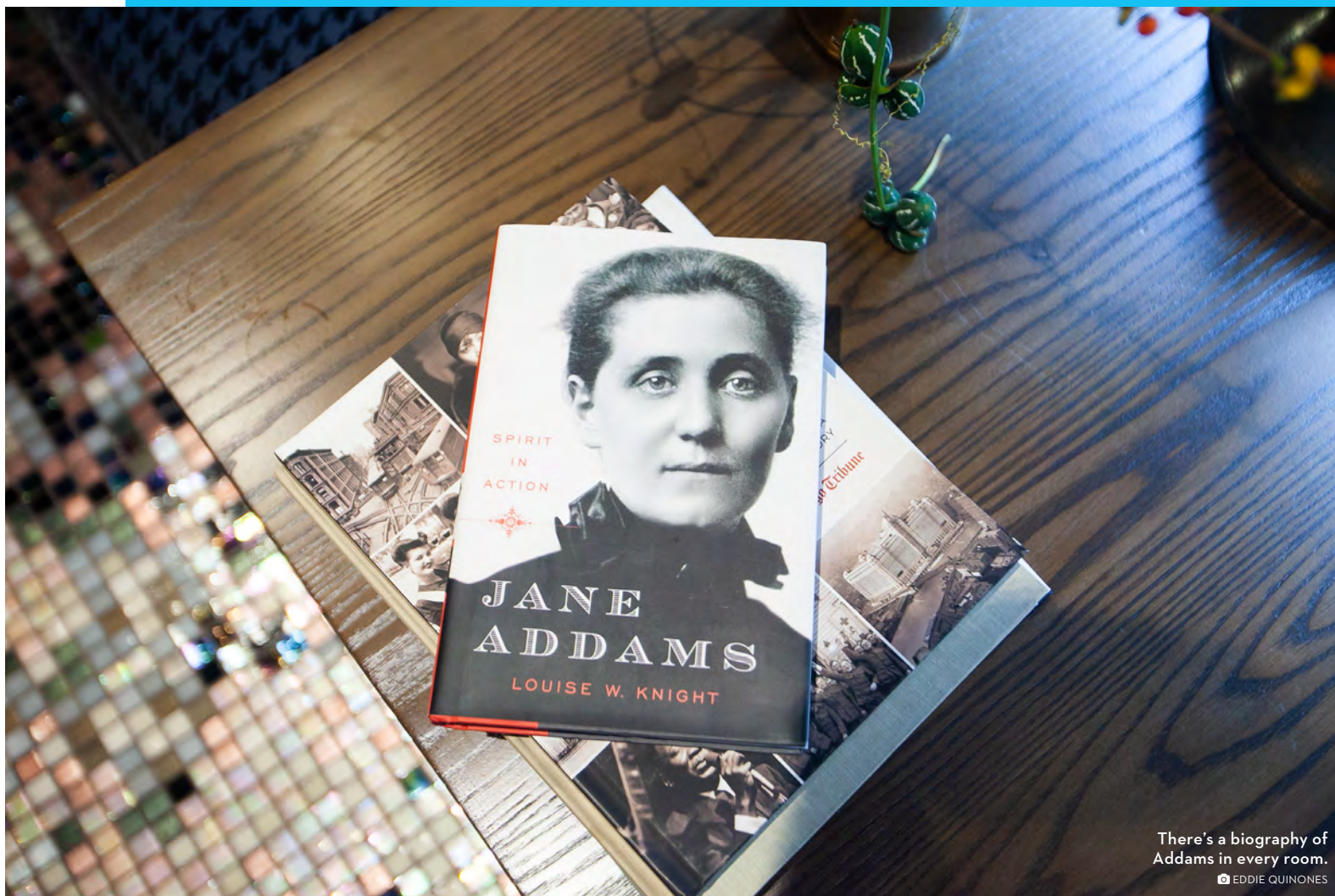
On the Hull-House Museum's Facebook page, Scott challenged the hotel to measure up to Addams's legacy: “Perhaps they can create a new hotel model, one that champions equitable and inclusive labor practices, emphasizes public en-



gagement and contributes regularly to causes that promote more humane living in Chicago.” Also, she really would have liked a call first: “While the new owners never reached out to us, we would be happy to inform them more deeply about Addams’ legacy.”

Knight, an Evanston-based author who has written two Addams biographies (the aforementioned *Spirit in Action*

and the 2005 book *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy*), says Addams probably would have disliked the hotel's name because of the “saint” designation. According to Knight, she hated the nickname because it was used as both a cloying kind of compliment and a half-mocking insult. “When you have an influential woman being called a saint back [in the 19th century]—it took away from their humanity and ➔



There's a biography of Addams in every room.
 EDDIE QUINONES

continued from 19

made them seem at a distant remove from everyday affairs,” says Knight. “Someone once said to Dorothy Day, ‘Oh, Dorothy! You are a saint!’ and she replied angrily, “‘You are not going to dismiss me that easily!’”

Hoping to educate the owners, Knight contacted them directly after the controversy broke last fall. It quickly led to a face-to-face meeting that both parties characterize as positive. “I think the initial negative reaction definitely caught the owners by surprise, and they were surprised to learn that ‘Saint Jane’ was a negative nickname,” said Knight.

Meghie and Mast were eager to prove they weren’t in the business of exploiting Addams’s legacy for a quick buck. After their consultation with Knight, they bought copies of her most recent biography to be placed in every room and commissioned her to choose some of Addams’s famous quotes to be displayed in the hotel. Then they set up a private tour of Hull-House and met with Scott, sent their employees on a field trip to the museum, incorporated Addams’s image into a 25-foot-long illustration placed across the Carbide and Carbon building’s front facade, and, yes, even created a custom Saint Jane scent—honeysuckle and linen—a nod to Addams’s favorite flower.

The owners insist that their glitzy hotel isn’t a typical tour-

ist trap—it’s also meant as a hub for the community. They’re partnering with local arts organizations like Young Chicago Authors and Hiplet Ballerinas for events at the hotel, and utilizing homegrown breweries and chefs. On top of that, 1.1 percent of Saint Jane’s profits are going to Meghie’s charity, the Jackson Chance Foundation, which provides free parking for families with children in the neonatal intensive care unit at Lurie Children’s Hospital.

“[Saint Jane] offers a gathering space for all; one that plays an active philanthropic role in the community and celebrates the collective power of Chicago’s unparalleled spirit and culture,” Meghie says.

The efforts to appease skeptics haven’t necessarily convinced them that the Saint Jane branding is great, but it’s certainly muddled the waters.

“The whole thing is complicated,” says Knight. “I’m naturally happy they’re sharing my book with people coming to the hotel. They didn’t just slap Jane Addams’s name on it for nothing. They really do want people to know who Addams was, and it’s clear they’re a hotel on a mission—that’s unusual.”

Even so, it’s clear that it’s a business whose primary mission is to make a lot of money. Saint Jane Hotel has much more in common with Palmer House than Hull-House. That much was clear when I visited both the new luxury lodgings

and the well-worn museum on September 6—Jane Addams’s 158th birthday.

History museums tend to be austere spaces, but that evening the Hull-House dining hall on South Halsted got a little raucous. As a DJ spun electronic music, a smattering of staff, student volunteers, and local artists drank wine or beer from Revolution Brewing while munching on chocolate cupcakes decorated with a black-and-white portrait of Addams, party hat photoshopped onto her head. The festivities eventually shifted into the adjacent mansion to preview the opening of a new participatory-arts-themed exhibition meant to expose visitors to the everyday activities at the settlement, from pottery making and bookbinding to improv theater. The entire Hull-House hummed with activity, much like it must have a century ago. “This place was an oasis of joy,” Knight told me between sips of her drink.

Sometimes Hull-House, founded in 1889 by Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, is mistakenly memorialized as a kind of glorified soup kitchen. The settlement community’s most essential mission wasn’t handouts but a collective culture and economy between college-educated residents and the surging population of European immigrants living in the overcrowded slums surrounding it. The arts, crafts, dining, and sports at the settlement house fostered class solidarity,

and Hull-House ended up being ground zero for Addams's attempt to improve work conditions during the Gilded Age, an era of vast inequality in which capitalists exploited workers earning low wages in the city's factories, stockyards, and railroads. "She was about working with working-class people to make things better for themselves," said Knight. "And that included fighting for higher wages, the right to strike, and more sanitary conditions for them."

Part of the reason that the "Saint Jane" nickname never truly fit Addams was her key role in numerous progressive campaigns and organizations like the ACLU and NAACP that weren't necessarily popular with the powers that be. She had more in common with Eugene V. Debs (for whom she voted in the 1920 presidential election) than, say, Mother Teresa. During the red scare of the 1920s, the FBI kept a thick file on her, and she was once labeled "the most dangerous woman in the world" (by the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Reserve Officer Training Corps).

In comparison, the only thing that could remotely seem dangerous about the hotel are the spooky prints hanging in many of the rooms depicting a well-dressed woman of Addams's era standing on a rooftop, her face obscured by a pink-hued cloudy mist in a way that makes her resemble a Victorian ghost. "It was creepy. . . . I didn't sleep well," one Yelp reviewer wrote after a stay.

I didn't see any sign of Addams's birthday celebration on my 30-minute guided tour of the place, only a small group planning a wedding reception inside one of the cavernous meeting rooms. The hotel is certainly impressive to look at—even if it lacks the palatial size of the grand old hotels of the Loop. The lavish 1929 Carbide and Carbon building it resides in is 40 stories of polished black granite, green and gold terra cotta, and bronze trim constructed with a champagne bottle in mind. It's like a living metaphor for the decadence of the *Great Gatsby* era.

Saint Jane is fitting for our nouveau Gilded Age: imagine an art deco structure from the roaring 20s updated with a cocktail bar and smart TVs. My tour guide, Katy Madsen, the hotel's "director of lifestyle," calls the aesthetic "modern glam." Madsen also insists that there's a distinctly feminine vibe throughout the place. "There are female owners, a female design team, it's named after Jane Addams. You can feel the femininity here."

I mostly felt a vibe of studied extravagance. Saint Jane Hotel takes the idea of "high-class" treatment extremely literally. Those willing to spend enough cash (up to \$1,400 a night) for the five-star experience are confined to the top 12 floors of the building, called the Tower at Saint Jane. There's no velvet rope separating it from the rest of the hotel—instead, there are key-card-locked elevators reserved for patrons staying there.

All guests at the hotel can dine at Free Rein, the restaurant—sorry, "contemporary brasserie"—on the ground floor. But only those holed up in the exclusive tower get a "personal curator" who caters to all requests. Tower guests are also granted special access to the Nobel, a private rooftop bar on the 24th floor that offers "sweeping views of Chicago's historic skyline." It's all vaguely reminiscent of *High-Rise*, the dystopian 70s sci-fi novel about a London apartment complex in which the lower-class residents are restricted to the lower floors and the professional classes get the top. The difference

is that at Saint Jane, where rooms start at \$269 a night, you'd be hard-pressed to find members of the working class who aren't actually working there.

That's not necessarily a break from the recent past. The Hard Rock Hotel was no Super 8. Saint Jane doesn't represent a gentrification of the property so much as a feminized upgrade. In July 2017, when Becker Ventures announced that they were ditching the fading Vegas-bro/rock 'n' roll-themed brand for a physical and conceptual makeover of the 381-room facility, they claimed that the hotel would fit in more with the neighborhood. That's true if you consider the skyscraper-heavy location: the Loop boasts the city's most expensive real estate, and the average home price in 2017, according to Trulia, was upward of \$577,000.

"We can position ourselves slightly more luxury, we can position ourselves something more Chicago-based that will resonate with the locals," Meghie told *Crain's Chicago Business* last year.

They were reacting, in other words, to the fluctuations of market forces. These days, citygoers demand unique "authentic" experiences, not faceless global franchises. That's presumably why Becker paired with Aparium, a seven-year-old Chicago-based hospitality company that specializes in creating hotels that are, according to their website, "engaging, inspiring, individual, and real."

Aparium's business model is somewhat ironic in that they follow a careful formula to make new spaces seem unique and organically grown. Saint Jane Hotel is Aparium's attempt to do for Chicago what they've done in 12 other cities. They renovate historic or antique buildings as hotels in a way that retains some of their original character while integrating design elements we now reflexively associate with urban authenticity—exposed brick walls, salvaged wood furniture, and vintage light fixtures. Aparium's acclaimed Foundation Hotel in downtown Detroit, for example, is in the former Detroit Fire Department headquarters. Its industrial-themed Iron Horse Hotel in Milwaukee is a transformed 100-year-old warehouse.

The result is something much more satisfying than the soulless mall-like hotels of the last generation, but there's also something deeply inauthentic about its single-minded pursuit of authenticity. Madsen told me that the Saint Jane concept didn't come from Meghie but the Door—a company with offices in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago that the *New York Observer* listed as the third-most powerful PR firm in the country in 2017.

Just as it's done for clients like celebrity chef Rachael Ray and FAO Schwarz, the Door was brought on board the Becker and Aparium hotel project, summed up by the hotel's hilariously self-serious slogan "Common ground for the uncommon." On its website, the Door brags: "We are creatives. We are connectors. We are content craftsmen. . . . Our Design House helps clients demonstrate their cultural relevance and create the sought-after emotional connection with their audience."

Yuck. Yet this brazen manipulation of our emotions shouldn't be at all surprising. We've seen millions of commercials, watched *Mad Men*, and implicitly understand that advertising works by seducing us with symbols and stories to sell stuff. Advertising is a kind of language that tells those under consumer capitalism who they are.

Sometimes that language is inelegant, which is why to have

some high-powered Hollywood "content craftsmen" sell Jane Addams back to Chicago feels incredibly shameless.

Shameless, but not a crime against humanity. Not anymore. Corporations have been capitalizing on the aesthetics and language of counterculture and radical movements for so long now that we hardly notice it. Tom Wolfe wrote about the co-option of 60s leftism as "radical chic" back in 1970, and a quarter century later Thomas Frank wrote about the corporate "Conquest of Cool." In our new age of corporate wokeness, Dior sells \$710 "We Should All Be Feminists" T-shirts, and Nike ads use images of quarterback-turned-activist Colin Kaepernick to sell shoes, and we barely blink.

Postmodern French philosopher Jean Baudrillard has warned that the ubiquity of the messages produced by advertising can cause a kind of seductive apathy under which we shrug at the messages consumer capitalism produces; the simulated world collapses into the real world, and we're no longer able to tell the difference between them. But we don't care, or do anything about it. "We live, sheltered by signs, in the denial of the real," he wrote in 1970. These days all of us are "content craftsmen." Look around. Go on Instagram, the social media platform where everyone sells stories about themselves.

Would Addams herself have cared about the Saint Jane Hotel controversy? Perhaps. Knight says, "I think she would have laughed at the toll road named for her, but the hotel may have given her pause." But Addams lived in an era when the material world still trumped the symbolic. She also ultimately believed that political and social reform could be realized not by living under an inflexible political ideology but by "rising above dogma and self-interest" and uniting different interest groups around the idea of a common good. Hull-House was a reflection of her deeply held belief in solving society's problems through negotiation, mutual understanding, and community.

There's a good chance that Addams's response to the Saint Jane Hotel wouldn't be to slam it on Twitter and call it a day, but to improve the conditions there. Shortly after Addams's birthday in September, employees of more than two dozen Chicago hotels went on strike, complaining of low wages, meager benefits, and seasonal layoffs. (Saint Jane's workers aren't unionized and did not participate.) Addams would arguably be more concerned with the people who work inside a hotel than with what's on its marquee.

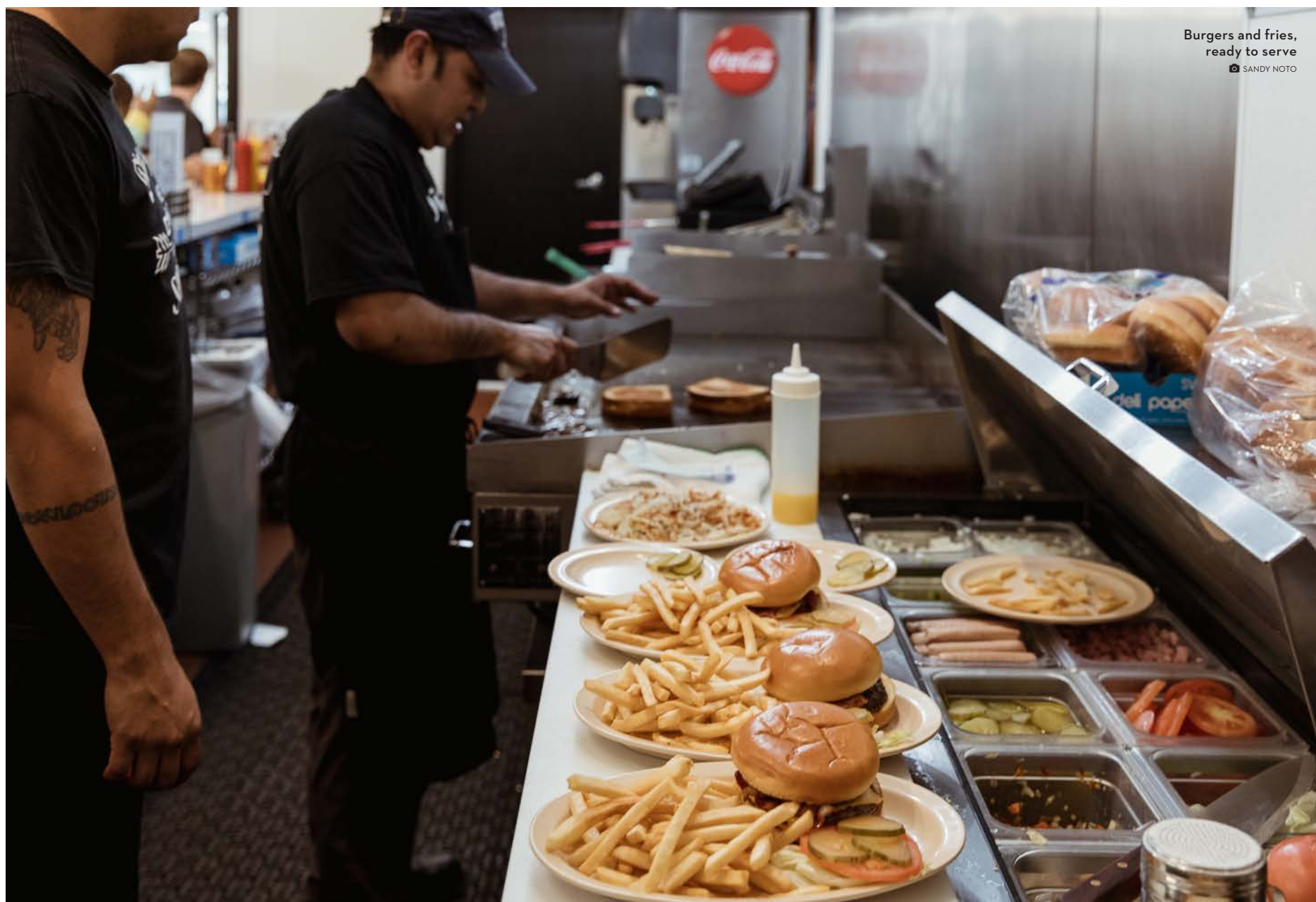
There's even a chance Addams might have appreciated the space. If she were alive in 2018, Knight says, it's possible that the mother of social work may have liked to rent a room there. Though she regularly broke bread and mingled with the lowest of the low on Chicago's southwest side, she still enjoyed some of the creature comforts of her upper-class upbringing, and often visited the Drake Hotel and stayed in elegant hotels when giving speeches around the world.

"It's true, she loved going to nice hotels," says Knight. "She was raised to enjoy them, and she liked luxury like a lot of us."

After all, no one's a saint. 

@RyanSmithWriter

The Door offers the clarification that the PR firm did not name the hotel, and was not involved with the branding of the hotel.



Burgers and fries,
ready to serve
© SANDY NOTO

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Diner Grill rises from the ashes

Long live the Diner Grill.

By **MIKE SULA**

There's a new charcoal-burning grill next to the flattop at the Diner Grill, but each time I've been by it's been cold. Perhaps it's just as well given the flammable nature of the 78-year-old Lakeview institution. Late-night louts waited nearly a year and a half for it to reopen after the Christmas Eve fire that in 2016 gutted one of the two vaulted streetcars that housed the grill, counter, and its emerald-green upholstered stools. Maybe you remember the previous fire that shut it down in 2008. Owners Arnold and Sheila DeMar—and ace grill

men Ricardo Hernandez and Kenny Coster, who work the flattop like samurai—are nothing if not resilient.

It isn't, however, unchanged. It reopened last July—no more streetcar vibe, but an approximate squared-off rectangular unit, its white-lit beacon no longer inviting **PLAY LOTTO HERE** but instead bearing the specious slogan **HOME OF THE "SLINGER."**

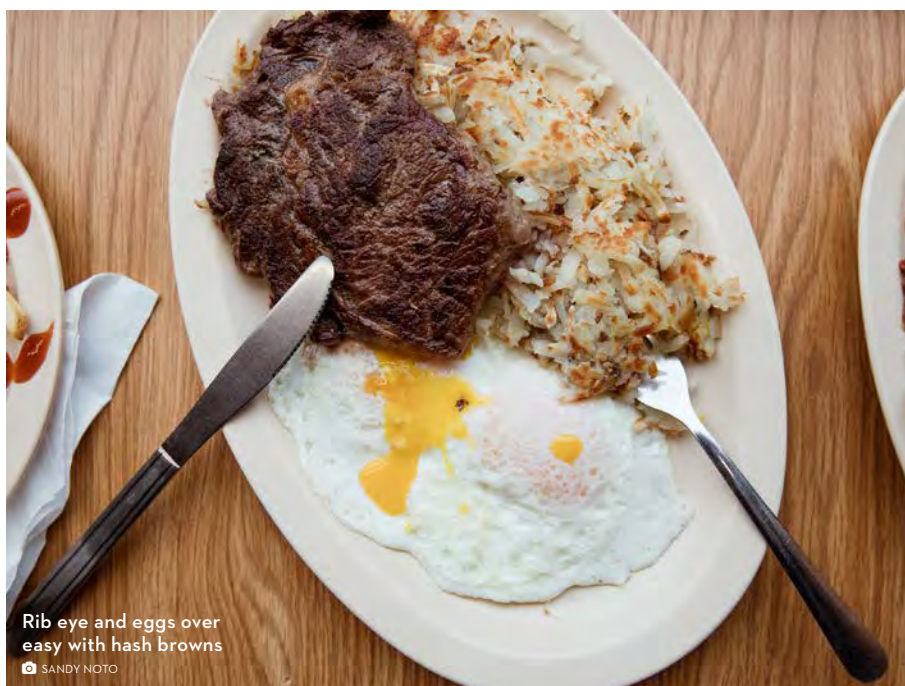
The home of the slinger—the legendary palliative pile of hash browns, hamburgers, eggs, chili, cheese, and onions—is Saint Louis, of course, not the Diner Grill. Claiming



FOOD & DRINK

Pulled pork over fries

📷 SANDY NOTO



Rib eye and eggs over easy with hash browns

📷 SANDY NOTO



The slinger with giardiniera 📷 SANDY NOTO

otherwise seems like it could tempt an angry God to strike again.

If you're a crazy person you can order a slinger through GrubHub now, but despite all this progress, the Diner Grill has maintained its practical appeal. It's still there for you if at 4 AM you need to preempt a hangover with cheeseburgers and eggs. It's still there for you if you're the sort of person who gets a kick out of dick-shaped pancakes. If you like to pretend you're Shelley Levene in *Glengarry Glen Ross* or a wisecracking drifter from a Tom Waits song, it's still there for you.

But there are milkshakes now (watery), and chilaquiles, hobo skillet, and steaks—a full Denny's press almost. I ordered a rib eye, slapped on the sizzling flattop and angled over a mound of shredded hash browns, with cackleberries, cooked over easy, to the side. It was thin, watery, and rubbery, and tasted of the concentrated animal feeding operation

it came from. But if I'd more than \$11 to work with I'd have gone to Boeufhaus. Times are tough. One needs protein.

I tried the new biscuits and gravy too—a discouraging gray blanket of floury cream sausage gravy smothering eggs, sausage patties, and hash browns, very close to a Saint Louis slinger variant known as the “the Toby.” The diner's new pulled pork, served atop the usual previously frozen french fries

and lashed with sweet barbecue sauce, compels you to finish it even it as you envision its aftereffects.

Now, more than ever, the slinger can't be ignored. One evening I had a friend in town who'd never experienced its unique pleasures. This is a person who, as a young man, could conjure magic from a box of Hamburger Helper after the smoke of a certain plant species was inhaled. I thought he'd get it.

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We'd walked briskly in a straight line across Irving Park Road from the Long Room at a very reasonable hour. I advised him that the only way to eat a slinger that is in any way of Chicago is to order it with giardiniera on top. I settled back with a bacon double cheeseburger and watched him dive in.

“All the ingredients individually are incredibly average,” he said, pushing it away. “The combination is incredibly mediocre.” I tried to explain that if he didn't finish the whole thing he wouldn't be awarded the commemorative certificate, signed by Kenny Coster himself, that would prove his strength and courage to his children and his children's children.

I was very satisfied with my cheeseburger—classic, uncomplicated—but I decided to help him out anyway. One very early morning some years ago, I ate a slinger and finished half of another belonging to a more feeble eater next to me at the counter. Either the slinger hasn't aged well or I haven't, but my pal was right, of course, and I pushed it away too.

But then again, we'd done it all wrong. One can't access the unique pleasures of a slinger in a sober frame of mind before 2 AM. The same goes for the Diner Grill itself, a refuge in the early hours for the uninhibited, under-the-influenced, and ill-advised. Put that coffee down. The Diner Grill is for closers only. You think I'm fucking with you? 📷

🐦 @MikeSula



Helen Joo Lee and
Liz Sharpe

© SARAH LARSON

Trump's inauguration that morning while a youth pastor condescends toward his belligerent, pregnant wife. To Hope, it's all a familiar, bearable aggravation until she reveals to childhood friend Erin, an imagined source of empathy amid the objectionable onslaught, that she had an abortion a decade earlier. Erin's pitiless condemnation leaves Hope sucker punched; she wakes in an instant to a political reality more insidious and threatening than she'd imagined.

RR IN THE CANYON
Through 11/24: Thu-Sat 8 PM,
Sun 3 PM; also Mon 11/5 and 11/19, 8
PM, no performance 11/22, Broadway
Armory Park, 5917 N. Broadway,
jackalopetheatre.org, \$30, \$20 students
and seniors.

And in the next leap forward, set in 2027, West amplifies that reality exponentially. Curfews. Checkpoints. Water rations. Universities, libraries, and newspapers shut down. And dire consequences for any woman who's ever had an abortion. Hope knows her number may be up, and to keep from imploding she confides her secret to her endlessly supportive husband, Charlie—only to suffer a rebuke so brutal she stands to lose him, their daughter, and any semblance of safety.

These three scenes, which make up the first act, showcase West's strengths as a playwright: she places nuanced characters in pressing circumstances until their already fraught relationships unravel. But in the final two scenes, set in an increasingly lawless, misogynistic America, her priorities shift, and the effort to teach a certain cautionary lesson about nascent American fascism leaves little room for the sort of idiosyncratic character development that makes the first act so compelling. The locales she chooses—a prison cell in 2037, a southwest hideout in 2067—have the feel of stock Hollywood sci-fi dystopia, as does the action that takes place there. And with so little time to build these alternate worlds, West resorts to increasingly broad strokes to hold things together, climaxing in a series of shoot-outs that teeter dangerously close to old west melodrama.

Still, the urgency of West's disturbing vision is affecting, especially in director Elly Green's passionate, streamlined production, which features some of the most convincing performances I've seen on a Jackalope stage. If it falters in the finish, it's still a hell of a journey. **A**

THEATER

A tough lesson

Calamity West's new play, *In the Canyon*, chronicles the slow erosion of abortion rights.

By **JUSTIN HAYFORD**

In ten short years, Jackalope Theatre Company has risen from a shoestring assemblage of Columbia College graduates mounting one play a year in decidedly out-of-the way locales to one of the off-Loop's most valuable players, offering consistently well-crafted, socially engaged productions in its two Edgewater theaters. In less time than that, local playwright Calamity West (*Hint*, *Rolling*), now a company member, has emerged as a leading aesthetic innovator of storefront realism as well as a tough-as-nails moralist ("What I'm always trying to do is teach lessons," she told *Performink* last year). So as I took my opening-night seat for Jackalope's bold, intelligent production of West's ominous new drama and surveyed the sold-out crowd—a who's who of young Chicago theater makers, all seemingly giddy with anticipation—I couldn't help but think, *This is*

the center of something extraordinary.

And on any given weekend, Chicago has another dozen such extraordinary centers where artists toil away trying to fashion a poetics muscular enough to reshape the world to their liking—or in the case of West's new work, to her own horror.

In the Canyon consists of five extended scenes, each taking place on January 20 but separated by ten years or more. It opens in 2007, in a stark urban apartment where churlish Katie pointlessly knits a shapeless nothing while purposefully playing her stereo loud enough to disturb her uptight neighbor. In teeters roommate Hope, demonstrably queasy, her disaffected boyfriend Doug reluctantly in tow. The trio make for a snipey assemblage, everyone on edge as though something dreadful is in the offing.

It quickly becomes clear that Hope's re-

turned from having an abortion, and now none of the three knows how to relate to the others, even as they try to hold fast to whatever tenuous relationships they might have had a few hours ago. Katie and Doug, between whom clearly no love has ever been lost, can't tend to Hope without belittling each other, and Hope can't get anyone to understand that the abortion really wasn't a big deal anyway. Eventually Katie and Doug flee the apartment (separately, of course), leaving Hope stranded until the same uptight next-door neighbor, a complete stranger, happens by and gives her an ovary massage.

It's at once masterfully tense, unsettling, and comedic, among the best scenes West has written (and that's saying something). And things only get more worrisome in the next, set in a barren church basement where Hope endures her parents' crowing over Donald

FUTURA

Thu 11/1-Sat 11/3: 7:30 PM, Dance Center of Columbia College, 1306 S. Michigan, 312-369-8330, dance.colum.edu, \$30, \$25 seniors, \$10 students.

ARTS & CULTURE



WILLIAM FREDERICK

DANCE

Dancing about architecture

Hedwig Dances assembles a Bauhaus-inspired *Futura*.

FUTURA STARTS WITH SEVEN eight-foot-long red poles moving through space like pendulums before dancers manipulate them into geometric forms and then use them to manipulate each other. “I’ve been making dances for 40 years,” says choreographer Jan Bartoszek, artistic director of Hedwig Dances. “I’ve always worked with objects.”

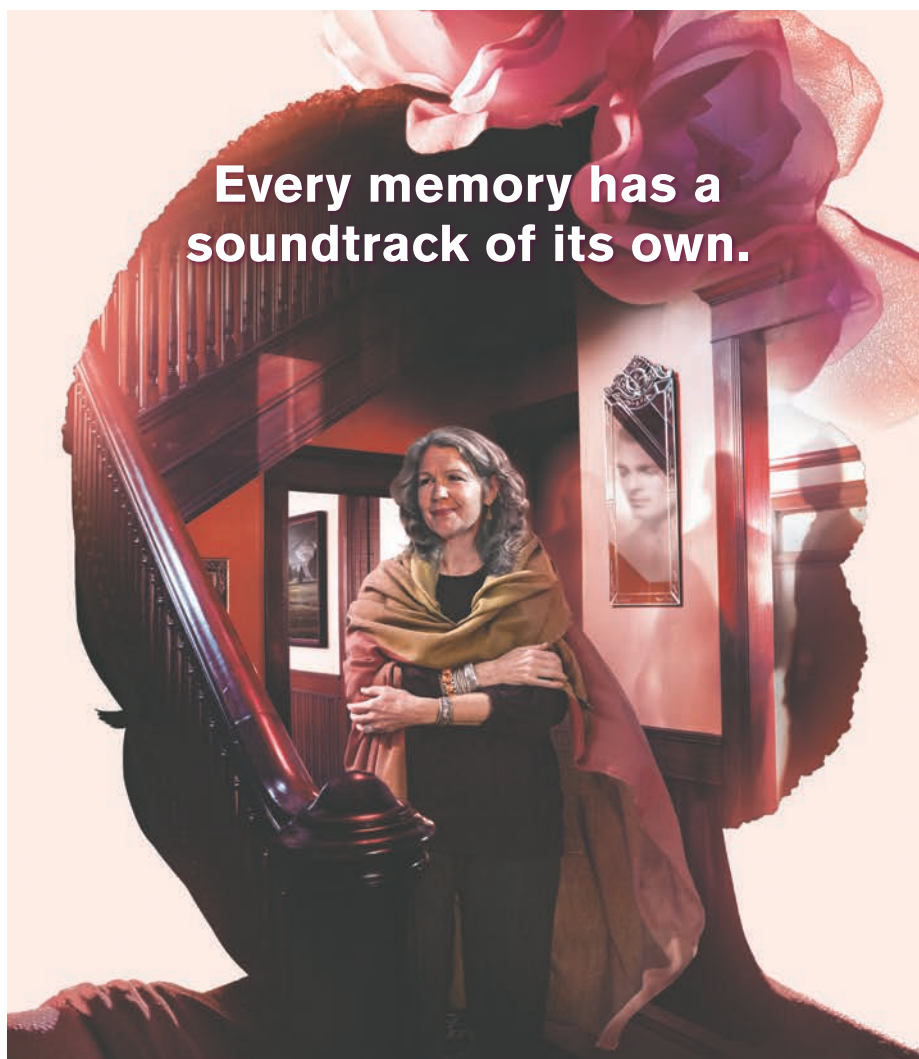
One hundred years after the Bauhaus was founded by architect Walter Gropius in post-World War I Germany with the intention of bringing together arts and crafts to create functional designs for utopian living, Bartoszek explores Bauhaus principles in *Futura*, which will be performed at the Bauhaus Dessau in Germany after its Chicago premiere. “It’s back to basics,” she says, “Bauhaus worked with the structures of circles, squares, triangles, colors like red, yellow, blue. These

were building blocks to try to rethink how to make visual ideas. The essence of Bauhaus is its simple usage of form, space, and color. It’s been really refreshing to work that way, with a certain level of abstraction that offers a way to create new metaphors.”

Bauhaus is also tied to the present and to the city of Chicago, notes Bartoszek. In addition to the influence on our architecture downtown, the Institute of Design at IIT, which coproduced *Futura*, was founded by László Moholy-Nagy, one of the original Bauhaus artists, after the German Bauhaus closed under the increasing influence of the National Socialists.

“Architecture can direct how people interact with each other,” says Bartoszek. “There’s an architecture in dance. I like that about it—I like form.” —IRENE HSIAO

Every memory has a soundtrack of its own.



Lady in Denmark

By **Dael Orlandersmith**

Directed by **Chay Yew**

After the death of her husband, a Danish American woman finds solace in the hauntingly beautiful music of their favorite singer, Billie Holiday. A journey through the couple’s time together—from the smoky jazz clubs of post-war Copenhagen, to the home they shared in present-day Chicago—*Lady in Denmark* is a passionate reflection on life and love.

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ARTS & CULTURE

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RR Flying high
Circolombia's *Acélééré* is a story of old-fashioned romance and bodies launched into space by other bodies.

In 1984 Cirque du Soleil started a revolution and won it. Now it's the Apple of acrobatic entertainment, with a Canadian corporate campus that looks like it belongs in Silicon Valley. Ironically, it was while visiting that campus that I got my first look at the next revolution. As spare as CdS is opulent, as ensemble-based as CdS is hierarchical, as body-centered as CdS is committed to gadgetry, France's Compagnie XY presented one of the most inventive circus performances I've ever seen, a piece called *Il N'est Pas Encore Minuit* (*It's Not Yet Midnight*).

The revolt continues in *Acélééré*, running briefly at Chicago Shakespeare Theater as part of Destinos, this year's edition of the Chicago International Latino Theater Festival. Created and performed by Circolombia, from Bogotá, this hour-long circus takes the aesthetic simplicity that made *Midnight* feel so new and casts it in an entirely different idiom.

Midnight evoked modern dance (although the dancers flew a lot); its silent narrative offered an apocalyptic vision redeemed by communal trust (because the community members knew they could stand on one another's shoulders). By contrast, *Acélééré* builds on Latinx hip-hop and speaks—both physically and in songs sung by the knockout team of Juliana Valentina Toro Velasquez and Diana Particia Vargas Montoya—about old-fashioned love and romance. But the real subject of *Acélééré* is bodies launched into space by other bodies, landing with breathtaking accuracy on narrow beams or on platforms constructed out of still more bodies. When an apparatus does appear, it consists (with one bizarre exception) of nothing more complicated than a fulcrum or a rope. Under director Felicity Simpson and choreographer Carlos Neto, the show parlays a nearly bare stage and a cast of ten into something airy, vibrant, ungadgets, and fun. —**TONY ADLER** *ACÉLÉÉRÉ* Through 11/4: Thu-Fri 7:45 PM, Sat 4 PM and 7:45 PM, Sun 4 PM, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 800 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com, \$25-\$45.

RR A hallucination or an alien abduction?

David Rabe's *Cosmologies*, expertly performed by the Gift, keeps you guessing.

David Rabe has spent a lifetime honing his craft. And it shows in *Cosmologies*, a remarkably well-written play receiving its midwest premiere at the Gift Theatre (which counts him as an ensemble member). Rabe first made his name in the 1970s writing savage, dark comedies about his experiences in Vietnam (*Streamers*, *The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel*, and *Sticks and Bones*, which won him a Tony) and later in the cocaine-addled world of Hollywood in the 1980s (*Hurly-Burly*).

As in his earlier plays, Rabe spends a lot of stage time in *Cosmologies* messing with the audience's mind, defying expectations with lots of sudden, unexpected twists and rambling poetic-philosophical discussions. The story begins simply enough, with a pair of earnest, nerdy high school students who decide to flee to Chicago, but it all goes off the rails when the protagonist, an honors student named Eric, is stabbed by a sadistic pimp and experiences what is either a long, two-act

hallucination or an abduction by aliens.

The result is a wild, fever dream of a play that keeps the audience guessing, and then, in the end, refuses to wrap things up neatly. This sounds like a mess, but Rabe somehow pulls it off. Or, I should say Rabe and the folks at Gift Theatre, under the direction of Michael Patrick Thornton, pull it off. Because this is the kind of play only an accomplished playwright in full control of his craft and a tight ensemble in full control of their instruments could make work. The production is full of fine performances, as we have come to expect from the Gift, led by Kenny Mihlfried as the Alice-like Eric, struggling to find his way out of Wonderland. —**JACK HELBIG** *COSMOLOGIES* Through 12/9: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM, no performance Thu 11/22, Gift Theatre Company, 4802 N. Milwaukee, 773-283-7071, thegifttheatre.org, \$35-\$40, \$20 student and industry, \$15 UIC.

From the screen to the stage
The Darkness After Dawn isn't quite the Ashley Judd-in-peril-style thriller we were hoping for.

It's not just the title. Down to the name of its central character—Rosemary Ward—Manny Tamayo's one-act drama is evocative of the Ashley Judd, not-quite-horror thrillers that were ubiquitous in movie theaters in the late 90s, the type that later found everlasting life on cable networks like TNT. Widow to a notorious defense attorney for crime bosses, Ward (Allison Cain) faces down a gang of crooked cops who invade her Lincoln Park brownstone set on looting the cash fortune they believe her husband earned off their backs. After stabbing one of the officer's hired confederates to death in self-defense, Ward finds herself in the crosshairs of the detective who masterminded the burglary.

In theater, plot and action often take a backseat to character development and engagement with broader overarching themes, so it's different and exciting when a play leans into the plot-driven tropes of genres like police procedurals and crime thrillers. At their best, like Joshua Rollins's *A Girl With Sun in Her Eyes*, they marry familiar television and film conventions with the claustrophobic, powder-keg intimacy of theater. But after some taut, agitating scene work after the attempted burglary between Cain and Blake Dalzin as the corrupt detective, Mandy Walsh's Factory Theater production deflates via increasingly outlandish cat-and-mouse conversations, clunky attempts to create moral ambiguity, and quick lights-up and lights-down montage sequences that just don't work onstage the same way they do onscreen.

And for a story set in contemporary Chicago, it's a bummer that the production's baddies feel so generic. By the end, it's ersatz *Panic Room* without the panic room, and a supposed shock ending sticks its landing like a wet clump. —**DAN JAKES** *THE DARKNESS AFTER DAWN* Through 12/1: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Thu 11/15 and 11/29, 8 PM, Factory Theater, 1623 W. Howard, factorytheater.com, \$25, \$18 students and seniors.

RR Election season
Fight Night highlights just how little control ordinary Americans have over the democratic process.

An emcee stands on a stage shaped exactly like a boxing ring sans ropes. A mike descends from above, as it does in every boxing movie you've ever seen. The emcee introduces you to five figures wrapped in hooded robes. And there you sit with a lavalier around your neck; at



the end of the lavalier, a palm-size numerical keyboard.

You're handed the keyboard/lavalier arrangement when you show up for *Fight Night*, now in a brief run at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, so that you and every other audience member in the room (129 of them on the night I attended) can help score a series of bouts involving the five figures, who, when they take off their robes, turn out not to be boxers at all, but candidates for a nonexistent political office. They campaign in your direction. You eliminate them one by one.

Crepily, amusingly American despite the fact that it's the work of a touring Belgian troupe, Ontroerend Goed, *Fight Night* plays with all the disturbing ambiguities inherent in an ostensibly democratic process, especially one distorted by digital technology, constant polling, and fake demographics. We may be the ones with the keyboards in our hands, but we retain less and less control as the 90 minutes pass and the system spins further and further out of whack. By the time we reach 100 percent consensus on the winner, our choices have lost all legitimacy. —**TONY ADLER** *FIGHT NIGHT* Through 11/4: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 800 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com, \$38-\$48.

RR Being Black for Dummies
Surrealistic elements help *Hooded* transcend its sitcom origins.

Hooded, or Being Black for Dummies is framed within the well-worn 1990s comedy trope “white people are like this/black people are like this.” Combined with a classic city mouse-country mouse setup of an inner city teen teaching his preppy and dorky suburban counterpart how to “be black,” this *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* for the stage is catnip for educated liberals.

Mercifully, the story acknowledges that the black experience is not a monolith and smartly leverages the stereotypes with modern racial and social critique, resulting in a comedic exploration of the constant barrage of mundane microaggressions that black people experience in otherwise all-white environments. Surrealistic elements help the narrative transcend sitcom comedy to meatier material, shooting off into a refreshingly unpredictable direction.

Jalen Gilbert as street-smart Tru and Jayson Lee as prep-schooler Marquis are stellar in their joyful exploration of their newfound friendship across class lines. Caroline Hendricks, Casey Morris, and Maggie Scramton are hilarious and occasionally squirm inducing as Marquis's classmates, but they're also capable of handling difficult scenes that have been smartly written to address harsh societal truths.

A bit involving a “laugh” sign attempts to identify and comment on the racist underpinnings of American comedy, but isn't used definitively enough to make more than its initial statement, and distracts from the rest of the action. Like the black experience, *Hooded* is messy, unpredictable, sometimes fun, sometimes shocking,

and should probably come with a trigger warning..

—**SHERI FLANDERS** *HOODED, OR BEING BLACK FOR DUMMIES* Through 11/17: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, 773-697-3830, firstfloortheater.com, \$25, \$20 students.

Will you miss me when I'm gone?
The Last Session's backstory makes it more than a relic of the AIDS crisis.

Fearing the final stages of dying from AIDS, a recording artist (Erik Pearson) gathers his closest musical colleagues to record an album inspired by his experience living with a terminal illness. Unbeknownst to everyone except his audio engineer (Benjamin Baylon), he intends for the performance to serve as his own artistic epitaph, a final love note to his friends and romantic partner, recorded the night before he plans to take his own life.

If that sounds like a romanticized, perhaps macabre, fantasy, it's not without good reason: Steve Schachlin wrote this semiautobiographical 1997 musical as a therapeutic exercise during his own frightening period of declining health; he himself had been diagnosed with AIDS during the tail end of the crisis. But in real life, Schachlin received the *deus ex machina* that his onstage altar ego never did: after undergoing new and experimental treatment, Schachlin's viral load fell to undetectable levels, and he survives to this day. That extratextual information about its development entirely changes the soft, gauzy, tear-jerky, sometimes schlocky comedic and musical aesthetic that otherwise date the piece into something more hopeful and defiant.

With musical direction by Pearson, Darilyn Burtley, Liz Bollar, and Baylon provide powerful and emotionally bare voices, and in Christopher Pazdernik's production for Refuge Theatre Project, the pop-gospel harmonies cut right down through the spine. In a contemporary production, though, there's no getting around how the central conflict—a conservative southern Baptist infiltrating the session—results mostly in a lot of hand-holding and basic-level PSAs about LGBTQ people's right to exist. —**DAN JAKES** *THE LAST SESSION* Through 12/2: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 7 PM, Atlas Arts Media, 4809 N. Ravenswood, refugetheatre.com, \$30.

RR La Divina
Janet Ulrich Brooks leads a superb *Master Class*.

A magnetic, mercurial performance by Janet Ulrich Brooks drives this portrait of opera diva Maria Callas, an international superstar in the 1950s and '60s. As famous for the burning intensity of her dramatic interpretations as for her sublime soprano, Callas was also notorious for her tempestuous temperament, her feuds with rivals she called “performing seals,” and her premature vocal decline, attributed by some to the drastic weight loss she undertook to transform herself from (in her words) an “ugly duckling, fat and clumsy and unpopular” into a

svelte goddess of the stage.

Terrence McNally's 1995 play with music finds the 48-year-old Callas giving a master class at New York's Juilliard conservatory in 1971, six years before her untimely death. In a neat metatheatrical stroke, the audience is cast in the role of observers at this lecture cum voice lesson, where "La Divina" critiques a procession of aspiring young singers, commenting on everything from the students' clothing choices and posture to their inadequate consonants and the lack of imagination they bring to their performances.

"No applause," she admonishes the audience. "This isn't about me." But of course it is, as Callas recounts her onstage triumphs with such collaborators as alternately inspired and intimidated by an aging star who reigned supreme when they were still in diapers. Stephen Boyer, as the class's starstruck pianist, provides fine accompaniment on the Steinway grand. —**ALBERT WILLIAMS**

In Nick Bowling's superb staging for TimeLine Theatre, Molly Hernández, Keirsten Hodgens, and tenor Eric Anthony Lopez are excellent as the students, alternately inspired and intimidated by an aging star who reigned supreme when they were still in diapers. Stephen Boyer, as the class's starstruck pianist, provides fine accompaniment on the Steinway grand. —**ALBERT WILLIAMS**
MASTER CLASS Through 12/9: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM, no performance Thu 11/22, Stage 773, 1225 W. Belmont, 773-281-8463, timelinetheatre.com, \$42.50-\$56.50.

RR A day in the life
Radio Culture presents the quotidian existence of a Belarusian everyman.

Volodya (Kevin V. Smith) is an ordinary young man. He lives with his parents in Minsk, Belarus, works as a construction-site foreman, and daydreams while listening to the radio. His life is utterly unremarkable, as demonstrated by the episodic vignettes from his typical workday that make up the U.S. premiere of Maxim Dosko's quotidian drama, in a new translation by Natalia Fedorova and Amber Robinson (who also directed).

Smith narrates and is the only speaking member of the cast. The "stage" is an unfinished, sheetrocked room with a plywood floor, cinder blocks, floodlights, and movable scaffolding as its only decor. Yet every inch of the space is utilized in an evocative way, starting from the first glimpse of Smith, hunched high up, within an exposed vent. As he goes through the mundane tasks of his work shift, checking that his workmen aren't too drunk to do their tasks and dealing with bureaucracy from the management, Volodya periodically drifts off to thoughts of the future. But like his waking life, his dreams are simple. He debates whether to buy his mother an electric meat grinder or splurge on a fancy food processor.

Smith's portrayal of this everyman isn't flashy but is affecting, especially in the way that he intentionally makes eye contact with audience members while telling Volodya's story. Dosko is able to make a memorable drama out of a sequence of events that, on the face of it, are utterly forgettable. And that is what makes Volodya's ordinary day extraordinary. —**DMITRY SAMAROV**
RADIO CULTURE Through 12/2: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, no performances Thu 11/22 and Fri 11/23, TUTA Theatre, 4670 N. Manor, tutatheatre.org, \$23-\$30.

RR There are no words
A silent retreat fails to provide enlightenment in *Small Mouth Sounds*.

Words have failed everybody in Bess Wohl's play before it even starts. They are on a silent retreat in the woods of upstate New York, where bears and mosquitos give city people on vacation from society a sense of roughing it. The six individuals who appear here file in without a backstory. What can be known about them emerges piecemeal, one gesture to the next. The silence amplifies slight things. Rodney (Travis A. Knight) can unroll a yoga mat like nobody's business, and so a domineering presence asserts itself early. Alicia (Heather Chrisler) snacks with a purpose, stays glued to her phone, has 20 pencils. The resident guru (Meighan Gerachis), whose disembodied voice plays over a loudspeaker, is being unprofessional; her phone keeps going off midsentence, interrupting a scattered, days-long sermon against material bondage. There are rivalries, crushes: everyone is misbehaving. Everyone talks. What started as a restorative fresh start turns quickly into an extension of home.

With crisp, surefooted direction from Shade Murray—100 minutes go by in a heartbeat—what this show lays bare isn't just the folly of faux enlightenment as a consumer good. Compassionately and with profound insight, it investigates the new distances that people feel between one another now in an impersonal, technologically obsessed world. For those who have grown accustomed to an extraordinary standard of work from A Red Orchid, this play's excellence is no surprise. The acting is exemplary from top to bottom, with particularly memorable performances from Chrisler and from Levi Holloway as the luckless Ned. —**MAX MALLER**
SMALL MOUTH SOUNDS Through 12/9: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Fri 11/23, 3 PM, no performance Thu 11/22, A Red Orchid Theatre, 1531 N. Wells, 312-943-8722, aredorchidtheatre.org, \$30-\$40.

No laughing matter
Yankee Doodles: Let Treason Ring takes the dubious position that everything Trump says is comedy gold.

Everything is so stupid right now that the question theater companies need to be asking themselves is whether it's worth putting more stupid out into the world to combat the stupid. That's not to say there isn't wit and a little solace in this screwball revue on national themes from the Conspirators, directed by Sid Feldman, which combines about a dozen favorite sketches from two earlier election-themed "neo-commedia" shows into one that's too long. But most of the anti-Trump jokes in this production and others like it are so labored and unfunny that you have to wonder what good they're doing anybody.

It's hilarious having a president whose face looks like a kumquat, hilarious the way he says dumb things all the time and can't be bothered to learn how the government works, what history is, or how not to encourage racist idiots to be themselves and ruin America. Heckle away, by all means, but let's not put clown makeup on and pretend to actually be the pinhead in chief and his affiliates—say what they've said, act out what they've done, lob real paper-towel rolls into the audience like he did in Puerto Rico—and then expect to bathe in the stunning glory of our own political defiance afterward. It's lazy. It's a bumper sticker in play form. With a celebrity in power, other modes of protest will have to be devised besides the free advertisement of innocuous parody, slogans restated verbatim but with a foam wig on. —**MAX MALLER**
YANKEE DOODLES: LET TREASON RING Through 11/3: Thu-Sat 8 PM, the Conspiratorium, 755 N. Ashland, conspirewithus.org, \$10. 

"MICHAEL KOERNER: MY DNA"
11/2-12/22: Tue-Sat 10 AM-5:30 PM, Catherine Edelman Gallery, 300 W. Superior, 312-266-2350, edelmangallery.com. **FREE**



Furó #7694, 2018  MICHAEL KOERNER / COURTESY CATHERINE EDELMAN GALLERY

VISUAL ART

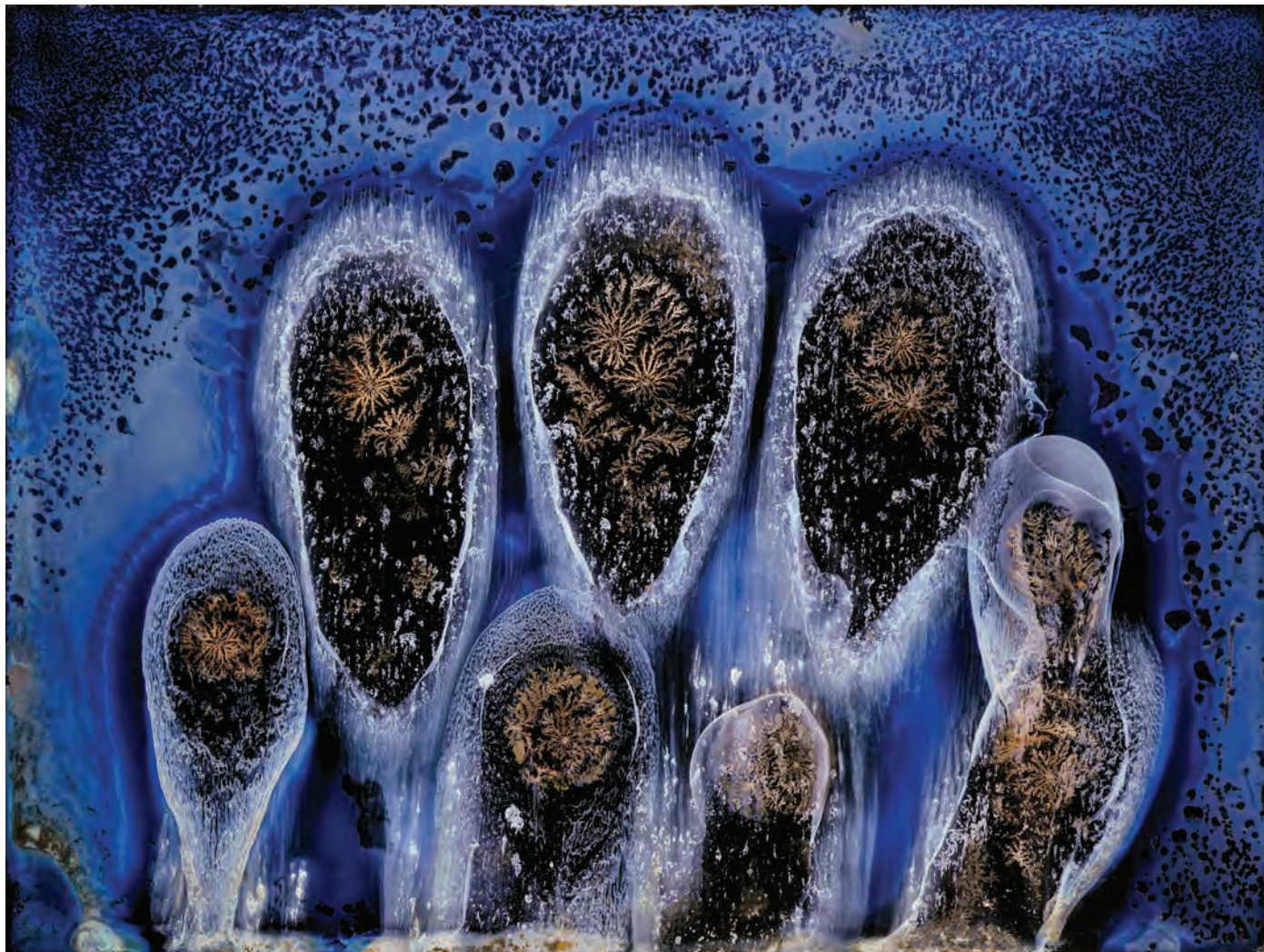
Permanent markings

Artist-chemist Michael Koerner uses tintype chemigrams to explore his genetic heritage in "My DNA."

By KATE SIERZPUTOWSKI

A sinister familiarity bleeds through the tintypes in "Michael Koerner: My DNA," the upcoming solo exhibition at Catherine Edelman Gallery. Silver crystals splinter across the dark-hued images, bordering oblong abstractions that overlap like Venn diagrams. These images are subtle introductions to Koerner's personal history with chemical processes and their related traumas. Upon closer inspection, the delicate

fractals appear like firework explosions or the edges of a disaster-signaling mushroom cloud, a reference to the hydrogen bomb the United States dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945, just 45 miles from Koerner's mother's childhood home. The tragedy caused tens of thousands of immediate deaths in addition to widespread and longer-term complications due to gamma radiation, which has directly impacted Koerner's family for the seven decades since the blast. ➔



Finger Prints #6183, 2018

MICHAEL KOERNER / COURTESY
CATHERINE EDELMAN GALLERY

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In addition to explosion-shaped images, Koerner's tintype chemigrams feature forms akin to X-rays, cellular formations, or mutated organisms growing under a microscopic lens. Koerner borrows the classification "chemigram" from Belgian artist Pierre Cordier, who began using chemicals on light-sensitive paper in the late 1960s. Like the more direct explosive imagery, these also relate to Koerner, who inherited genetic mutations from his mother's proximity to the bomb and his father's proximity to a testing site for thermonuclear devices after his service in the Korean war that have presented their own complications in his life. Both his parents died from cancer-related illnesses. One of their sons was miscarried, another was stillborn, another died shortly after birth, and Richard, the only child besides Koerner who survived beyond

infancy, died from lymphatic cancer when he was just 32 years old.

"I am the only surviving sibling of a family of five brothers, and there is some guilt associated with that," says Koerner. "Why do I get to survive? All of my artwork references this theme of genetic mutations and cancer in my own life, in addition to my brothers, my mother, my father, fiancées, girlfriends, friends of friends, aunts, and uncles who have all suffered from cancer. This is a story that I can't get away from."

Koerner has worked with photography since 2004. Over the years his practice has slowly moved into chemical-based works, as he began focusing more on the process behind the photographic image and less on its pictorial outcome. Koerner took a workshop with France Scully Osterman at the George East-

man Museum in Rochester, New York, in 2009 that helped clarify a few of his techniques, but a majority of his chemical choices and processes have been completely self-taught. Each six-by-eight-inch work is created by dripping and layering chemicals onto the surface of a metal plate covered with thickening agents, such as agar gum or honey, in a process akin to painting. This creates abstract images Koerner only partially controls. The natural reactions form double helices, mountainous peaks, and appendage-like shapes that mirror his own hands.

"Something that will be in every piece I make are these fractals, these pure silver growth patterns," explains Koerner. "I can't control that. Sometimes they grow long, spindly, treelike patterns, and sometimes they are short and stubby. I don't have a choice, and I

love that about this abstraction. A photographer never creates the tree they took a picture of, they are just there to capture the light that reflects off of it. That is what nature gives you. I like the fact that the fractals are also formed by nature, and that their growth references the mutations in my own DNA."

When he's not experimenting with tintypes in his basement studio, Koerner teaches advanced organic chemistry to prehealth students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His teaching methodology ties many of his lessons to firsthand experiences with family or friends who have suffered from cancer, and presents personal stories alongside chemicals. For example, while drawing the symbol for doxorubicin, a cancer chemotherapeutic with terrible side effects that's used to slow down the proliferation of cancer cells, he might tell a story about a patient he would talk to while his father was receiving his own treatment for cancer.

Koerner chose tin as the medium for his photographs rather than the more modern photographic selection of paper. The photographer clings to the permanence of the metal-based works, proven over centuries to have the material integrity that will last a lifetime and beyond. "I am purposefully making works that are on a metal plate, a permanent object," he explains. "That permanence is there by choice. I could do this on paper, I could do this on glass, but I am picking a medium that is not going to fade. They are not going to oxidize, they aren't going to go away." ■

@KateSierz

MONROVIA, INDIANA ★★★

Directed by Frederick Wiseman. 143 min. Fri 11/2–Thu 11/8, Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, 312-846-2800, siskelfilmcenter.org, \$11.

ARTS & CULTURE

Monrovia, Indiana

**MOVIES**

Monrovia, Indiana: A great place to be an inanimate object

Frederick Wiseman's latest documentary is curiously uninterested in the human inhabitants of a small town.

By **BEN SACHS**

One of Frederick Wiseman's many talents as a filmmaker is his ability to achieve poetic abstraction by scrutinizing concrete activity. The passages in *Meat* (1976) detailing the corralling and slaughter of steers inspire one to meditate on human beings' relationship to animals. The opening 25 minutes of *Canal Zone* (1977), which show the intricate workings of the Panama Canal, lead viewers to think about the maintenance of society as a whole. The portraits of bodies in movement in *Ballet* (1995), *La Danse* (2009), and *Boxing Gym* (2010) encourage reflection on our cor-

poreality, and so on. Wiseman is fascinated by how things work, but he often eschews linear sequences depicting one step of a process after another; instead, he likes to edit around a procedure, fostering a sense of rumination through the collection of diffuse details.

So it goes in *Monrovia, Indiana*, Wiseman's documentary feature about a small town and its surrounding rural environs. The film teems with passages of people and machines at work, from line cooks at a bar and grill to crop dusters and tractors in operation. Wiseman is so interested in how things get done, in fact, that he devotes little time to interpersonal re-

lationships. There's little conversation in the movie, and when it occurs it tends to revolve around community rituals and the responsibilities of local government. The overall tone is contemplative, if not serene. Throughout *Monrovia*, Wiseman returns to painterly (and notably depopulated) shots of fields and crops, suggesting that the beauty of rural America has little to do with people and everything to do with landscapes. To the extent that people factor into these landscapes, it's as stewards of the environment or local traditions. Very few of the human subjects emerge as individuals with motivations of their own.

Needless to say, anyone expecting a social analysis of rural America in the age of Donald Trump will be greatly disappointed. There are next to no invocations in *Monrovia* of the resentment, anger, and nativism that the news media has emphasized in the past few years when covering this part of the country. Wiseman still alludes to these feelings during scenes of town committee meetings—first, when a member raises concern about newcomers moving into a new housing development, and later, when another member expresses distrust of the federal government in its ability to provide frequent inspections of the town's fire hydrants. (The most topical moment may be when one committee member chastises another for using the word “collusion” to describe the relationship between property developers and the state housing board.) Yet the larger political significance of these discussions is obscured by the immediacy of the concerns. The committee members seem justified in their frustration; after all, they just want their town to function smoothly.

Perhaps the most unsettling scene of *Monrovia* takes place in a gun shop, which Wiseman presents almost identically to the local supermarket, cutting between browsing customers, neatly organized displays, and the person working the counter. The director may be commenting on the normalization of guns (and, by implication, gun violence) in America, but then again, he just might be illustrating another aspect of how the people of this town work and shop. As usual, Wiseman maintains the illusion of being unbiased, presenting the facts of a situation and letting audiences decide how they feel about them. In any ➔

★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ AVERAGE ★ POOR ● WORTHLESS

ARTS & CULTURE

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case, most viewers will likely agree that the gun shop sequence is far less dynamic than the one that follows, which shows farmers harvesting corn and delivering it to a silo. The juxtaposition of these two sequences suggests, somewhat eerily, that the people of Monrovia aren't as interesting as the machines they operate.

The corn-harvesting sequence speaks to another peculiar quality of *Monrovia*, which is the way Wiseman makes routine activities seem significant and milestones seem trivial. A short sequence of a butcher preparing hamburger patties generates an unaccountable sense of wonder (or at least Zen-like fixation), yet a longer sequence depicting a citizen celebrating his 50th year of membership at the local Masonic lodge feels oddly flat. Like Abbas Kiarostami's *24 Frames*, which played here earlier this year, *Monrovia* develops a fascinating internal tension between momentum and tedium, and like Kiarostami's film, it's at its most commanding when people don't factor into the action. Even the succession of portraits at a barber shop and a beauty salon come across as impersonal (Wiseman has rarely seemed so uninterested in faces as he does in this movie); the focus isn't on the heads in close-up, but rather what's being done to them.

Moreover, people don't seem to engage in conversation in the film. The talk in *Monrovia* generally proceeds as monologues: a high school teacher delivering a lecture on local sports history, a mattress salesman giving a spiel about a stain-resistant fiber, a vintage car buff regaling his acquaintances

(who don't appear especially interested) about the various vehicles he's owned. Some of the speakers praise the value of dedication, like when the high school teacher invokes some of Monrovia's star athletes or when the Masonic lodge leader praises the commitment of the honoree. Yet Wiseman barely delves into what these people have been dedicated to—effort, for these subjects, seems like an end in itself. There's no greater sense of achievement; the words ring hollow, especially when compared with Wiseman's vibrant landscape imagery.

Monrovia climaxes with a reverend's oration at a funeral for one of the town's citizens, and it's got to be one of the least interesting speeches Wiseman has ever included in a film. Again, we hear talk of dedication (to such old standbys as work, commitments, and faith), but the dedicated woman in question remains a stranger. The reverend seems more fatuous than earnest, relying on bromides rather than a genuine consideration of the woman he's honoring; also, his suggestion that the woman has gone to heaven so she can clean God's house is condescending and a little gross. The film ends, pointedly, not with his oration, but with the woman's burial. Wiseman concludes by reminding us how much he loves seeing people and machines at work—this time, the work involves a dump truck filling a grave with earth and a gravedigger placing flowers on the site. These are lovely images, but they leave a disturbing aftertaste. The final take away from *Monrovia, Indiana* is that the town is a great place to be an inanimate object. **R**

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MOVIES

RR Bodied

A white graduate student at Berkeley, working on a master's thesis about the linguistic innovations of hip-hop, gets sucked into California's underground battle-rap scene, reinventing himself as a competitive performer. This lively satire has a good deal on its mind, touching on contemporary American race relations, campus culture, the persistence of ethnic stereotypes, and, yes, the linguistic innovations of hip-hop. Screenwriter Alex Larsen packs in so many ideas that the film is as intellectually dense as anything by Jean-Luc Godard, though director Joseph Kahn maintains a fluid style throughout; the various concepts emerge naturally from the settings and go down smoothly. If anything, Kahn's approach is a little too careful—the story proceeds slowly at times, as if the director were making sure viewers have enough time to process every idea—but his insistence on thinking things through is commendable. Also, the battle-rap sequences are generally thrilling. **—BEN SACHS** *R*, 120 min. 1:15, 4:15, 7:15, and 10:30 PM. *River East 21*

Bohemian Rhapsody

There's a scene in *Bohemian Rhapsody* the movie where the screen fills with negative reviews of "Bohemian Rhapsody" the song, with the phrase "perfectly adequate" sticking out. This conventional rock biopic by director Bryan Singer is just that. Aside from some exciting music sequences and a fantastic performance by Rami Malek, who almost perfectly channels the magnetic flamboyance of Queen front man Freddie Mercury, the film never quite delivers. Perhaps because the filmmakers try to show us everything that happened in Queen's beginnings leading up to its epic 1985 Live Aid set, they don't delve into some of the scenes that deserved more nuance, like Mercury's conflicting relationship with his immigrant past or his identity as a gay man (though contrary to early criticisms, the movie doesn't erase this part of him or omit his AIDS diagnosis). The film ends on a musical high, accurately capturing the essence of the band's energy but, despite Malek's best efforts, fails to capture the elusiveness of Freddie Mercury. **—MARISSA DE LA CERDA** *PG-13*, 134 min. *Arclight Chicago*, *Century 12 and CineArts 6*, *Chatham 14 Theaters*, *City North 14*, *Lake*, *Landmark's Century Centre*, *Showplace ICON*, 600 N. Michigan, *Webster Place 11*

Love, Gilda

Trailblazing comedian Gilda Radner is the subject of this effusive documentary, grounded in the wise choice to have much of the story told by Radner herself. First-time director Lisa D'Apolito interweaves Radner's personal writings and audiotape recordings with photographs and home videos to create a moving portrait of the original *Saturday Night Live* cast member, which stretches from Radner's childhood in 1950s Detroit to her death from ovarian cancer in 1989. Famous fans like Melissa McCarthy and Amy Poehler read aloud from her diary with a mix of awe and delight while her contemporaries, including Martin Short and Lorne Michaels, share their memories and insights into her too-brief life and career. Fittingly though, it's Radner's voice—especially when describing her struggles with food, fame, and men—that shines brightest. **—LEAH PICKETT** *88 min. Fri 11/2, 2 and 7:45 PM; Sat 11/3, 3 PM; Sun 11/4, 5:30 PM; Mon 11/5, 6 PM;*



Tue 11/6, 6 PM; Wed 11/7, 8:30 PM; and Thu 11/8, 8:15 PM.
Gene Siskel Film Center

Making Montgomery Clift

This documentary isn't so much about the actor Montgomery Clift as it is about the past efforts to write biographies that accurately reflect his life and working methods. Robert Clift, the actor's youngest nephew, codirected the film with Hillary Demmon, and they spend much of the running time on the actor's brother, who devoted his retirement to working with biographers so they could get their facts straight. Getting into the nitty-gritty of how biographies are composed, the filmmakers make one realize the difficulty of presenting a subject's life in a fashion that adequately pleases the people who knew him. Their intense focus on this process can be frustrating—I yearned for more facts about Clift's involvement in such classics as *Red River*, *I Confess*, and *Wild River*, though the passages about how he sculpted his performances in *The Search* and *Judgment at Nuremberg* speak to his impeccable craft. —**BEN SACHS** 87 min. Fri 11/2, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 11/3, 3 PM; and Mon 11/5, 7:45 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR The Other Side of the Wind

Orson Welles shot this self-referential (and often satirical) drama between 1970 and 1976, but due to

extenuating circumstances, was never able to complete it; only in 2017 did a team of filmmakers embark on assembling a feature from Welles's footage, proceeding according to the many notes he left behind. It's impossible to say whether the resulting product is what Welles would have created, but what exists certainly provides much food for thought. The story takes place over a 24-hour period during which a lauded, Hemingwayesque filmmaker (John Huston) celebrates his career, presents rushes of his new film, and fends off journalists, proteges, and various hangers-on. The rapid, dizzying montage—similar to that of Welles's *F for Fake* (1975)—is so overwhelming that you may have trouble keeping track of the numerous characters and highly personal themes, which range from artistic integrity to sexual anxiety to the differences between our public and private selves. Yet Welles's bitterness about Hollywood is unmistakable, as is his enthusiasm about the possibilities of filmmaking in the poststudio era. With Peter Bogdanovich and Oja Kodar (who cowrote the script). —**BEN SACHS** R, 122 min. 35mm. Sat 11/3-Sun 11/4, 11 AM. Music Box

Suspiria

Suspiria may be a remake of the beloved 1977 Dario Argento film, but it has no problem establishing itself as its own entity. Abandoning the original's lavish set design, director Luca Guadagnino awes us through a

Bodied

series of breathtaking dance sequences as the students at a sinister Berlin dance academy prepare to perform *Volk*, created by their instructors as a response to the trauma of World War II. When Susie (Dakota Johnson) arrives at the academy in 1977, she is quick to note the darkness permeating her new home, both inside the school and outside of it: the political climate in the city is turbulent. But the more Guadagnino attempts to subvert the negative stereotypes of female leadership, the more he succumbs to them, eventually reassuring us that Susie's growing power is no threat to the patriarchy. A female director probably could have done something better with its themes, but *Suspiria* remains in thrall to the usual male obsessions with women's purity and threatening sexuality. —**ANDREA THOMPSON** R, 152 min. Century 12 and CineArts 6, Music Box, Showplace ICON

Wildlife

Paul Dano's mannered fussiness as an actor carries over to his first effort as director, an adaptation of Richard Ford's novel about an unhappy family in early 60s Montana. The story kicks into gear when the father (Jake Gyllenhaal), an overly proud control freak who bounces from job to job, gets hired to fight wildfires outside the small town where he's recently moved his wife (Carey Mulligan) and 14-year-old son (Ed Oxenbould). Left alone, the solitary wife begins to question her identity (particularly with regard to her sexuality), and the son watches on with a mixture of confusion and wonder. Dano, who wrote the script with Zoe Kazan, tries to compensate for the familiarity of the material with emotionally precise performances and exacting compositions that reflect the characters' upright behavior, but there's no shaking the feeling that this sort of study of all-American repression has been done to death. —**BEN SACHS** PG-13, 105 min. Fri 11/2-Sun 11/4, 10:50 AM, 1:35, 4:10, 7, and 9:45 PM; Mon 11/5-Thu 11/8, 10:50 AM, 1:35, 4:10, and 7 PM. Landmark's Renaissance

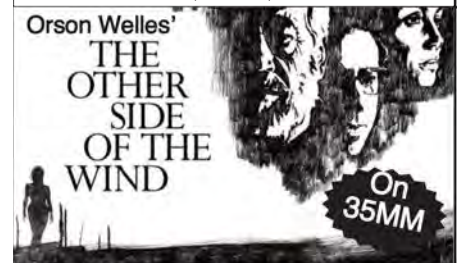


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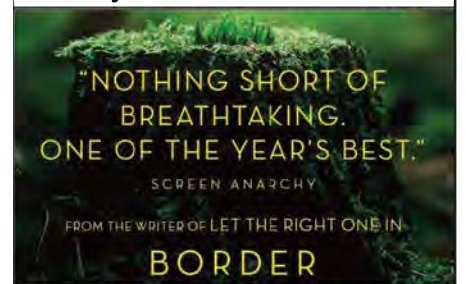
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CUPCAKKE

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THE CHICAGO RAPPER DOESN'T HAVE TO SPLURGE TO CREATE HER OUTRAGEOUS PERSONAS: "CHEAP SHIT WITH A RICH SPIRIT GOES A LONG WAY."

The BLOCK BEAT BY
the
TRIBE

Words BY TIFFANY WALDEN

Cupcakke at Cosmo Beauty @QUISSY LOPEZ

Cupcakke rarely comes to the hood anymore. The 21-year-old rapper grew up on South 63rd Street and King Drive, in what residents called the Calumet building. After her mom lost her job and then their apartment, Cupcakke spent ages ten through 13 bouncing from homeless shelter to homeless shelter with her family.

During those years she wrote poetry, and at the invitation of various pastors she began performing in churches. When she was 14, someone at a north-side church near the shelter where Cupcakke lived at the time suggested she turn her poems into raps as a way

to make money. She started off writing mostly clean Christian rap, but as she matured and explored her body, her bars took a hard turn. When she was 17, she went public with her first song, "Vagina," and broke the Internet with its playful, salacious video: at one point Cupcakke deep-throats a zucchini while wearing rainbow pasties.

She dropped two mixtapes in 2016, *Cum Cake* and *S.T.D.*, and since then she's released three albums: *Audacious*, *Queen Elizabitch*, and this year's *Ephorize*. On the eve of the much-anticipated *Eden*, due out November 9, Cupcakke's raps are clearly bringing in the



Cosmo Beauty is under the Green Line station at 63rd and Cottage Grove.
 @QUISSY LOPEZ



dough. When she met up with the TRiiBE in August, she didn't detail exactly how much, but she did say she's making enough to treat herself to designer things every once in a while—like the Tabasco-red crossbody Gucci bag on her arm.

Mostly, though, she talks about her material success in terms of the obstacles it's created. For one thing, it makes her a lick—a glowing target for opportunists on the block, who

might run up and snatch her purse to sell it.

When you have money, Cupcakke says, people get harder to trust. "The only time I really come to the hood is when I'm coming to the beauty supply—'cause you can go, like, in nice neighborhoods in Chicago, and [they] ain't got no wigs like they got wigs here."

We're standing in the middle of Cosmo Beauty on 63rd and Cottage Grove. A hood staple, it's right underneath the Green Line stop and just a few blocks from where Cupcakke lived as a child. It's one of the few beauty supplies in Chicago where Cupcakke knows she can find a variety of wigs to match her moods from day to day, including the \$19.99 long jet-black girl she's rocking right now. She bought it here.

"Even with a lot of money, I still come here because I like wigs," Cupcakke says. We're walking around the store looking for a tiny comb for her bangs. She's already grabbed an unopened pair of big silver hoops from the shelf and put them on for the photo shoot. The two items rang up at \$2.76 total—and would've cost more than \$10 at Target.

"The beauty supply, to me, is everything. I get my combs here, my wigs here, my lip gloss here. Everything comes from the beauty supply," Cupcakke explains. "I just bought some leggings from the beauty supply, and I didn't give a fuck. It was dope. I like cheap shit. Cheap shit with a rich spirit goes a long way."

The relationship between a black woman and her beauty supply is one built on trust—just as she trusts her beautician with her hair or her nail tech with her mani-pedi. The beauty supply stores of the north side and white

suburbs can't compare to the likes of Cosmo Beauty. For one thing, it's cheaper. A tub of Eco Styler gel could be \$5 to \$8 at Sally or Ulta, but it's only \$3 or \$4 in the hood. Plus, the hood beauty supply carries everything the black woman wants and needs.

In the aisles of Cosmo, you'll find the relaxer kits from ORS Olive Oil and Just for Me, the Softsheen jams, and the tiny brushes for creating perfect swoops of baby hair and sideburns. For the naturalistas, there are plenty of silk pillowcases, Cantu Shea Butter leave-in conditioners, Shea Moisture curl enhancers, and Eco Styler gels to go around.

With her multiple alter egos, Cupcakke thinks of herself as many women in one, and the beauty supply affords her the freedom to be whoever she wants to be. Today, she's Elizabeth Eden Harris, the persona that uses Cupcakke's birth name.

"As you can see, I got on black hair right now, because I feel like this is more normal and civilized. That's how Elizabeth is," she says. But when she's Cupcakke, it's an entirely different situation.

"When you get Cupcakke, you get, like, the big-ass frisky, big-ass wig," she says.

The most fun of her three personalities is Marilyn MonHOE, a play on the famous 1950s sex symbol. Marilyn's Twitter bio reads "the goal is to suck 100K dicks," and she's amassed 379,000 followers by tweeting photos of herself with deliciously witty bars as captions. "Marilyn MonHOE is just, like, the soft wave," Cupcakke says. "If I have to describe [my alter egos] as wigs, that would be them three."

CUPCAKKE, DJ FUNK, DJ KING MARIE

Sat 11/10, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, sold out, all-ages

The hood remains a big part of who Cupcakke is. It taught her how to hustle. She didn't have a manager at the time of our interview, and as an independent artist she's booked her own shows, studio time, and travel—which means every dollar she's made has gone straight to her.

The hood also taught Cupcakke how to be fly on a budget. When she was growing up, her family didn't have much money. Her mom

regularly shopped at Payless for her shoes, and Cupcakke got made fun of at school because of it.

"I remember one time, my mom finally bought me a pair of Jordans," she says. "I never even knew there was, like, Jordan numbers and shit. I was just, like, super happy to have some Jordans. I walked into school and everybody was like, 'Take them shits off. Them bitches old.'"

Stories of hardship like that are a big part of what makes Cupcakke so relatable. In her music and on social media, she's open about her bouts with depression. In August, Cupcakke logged off Twitter for a couple days after posting that "it seems like absolutely nothing excites me no more." At the same time, she shared a story about trying to pass out money to a crowd of homeless people she'd seen sitting on a corner in Texas—she said her cash was snatched from her hand and her mom was hit in the head, and that she regretted even getting out of the car.

"That was just 1 percent of my depression," Cupcakke says. When she feels low, she explains, it often comes from having money and losing friends because of it.

"When you got money, you can't really have friends. It don't match, because everybody want something, and it's like everybody have they own motives," she says. "It's like, damn, is this person using me or is it my true friend?"

Because Cupcakke has blown up in popularity, people seem to expect her to abandon everyday activities. When she's at the boat, the other gamblers at the casino act shocked to see her. "Why are you here? Why are you trying to get money?" Shit. I'm trying to flip," she says through a laugh.

Even when she's at the beauty supply grabbing a wig, women will ask what she's doing there. "Same shit you doing in here," Cupcakke says. "We both getting the same shit. We getting some wigs."

She may indulge in the occasional piece of designer gear, but Cupcakke herself hasn't changed. She's just as comfortable, if not more so, in her \$19.99 black wig from Cosmo as she is with her \$1,200 Gucci bag.

"No one else looks like you. So you should always be confident, and that's just how I feel," Cupcakke says. "I can wear a fucking sheet outside, and I'ma rock it like it's a Rihanna gown. It don't matter. It is what it is." 📺

🐦 @TheTRiiBE



Cardi B and Nicki Minaj are feuding—and these women in Chicago rap don't see the point

Psalm One, Akenya, Sisi Dior, Chimeka, and Mother Nature talk about sisterhood, mutual support, and the pernicious notion that hip-hop has room for only one female star at a time.

By MARYKATE O'MEARA



Upper right to lower left: Psalm One, Chimeka, Akenya, Klevah and T.R.U.T.H. of Mother Nature, and Sisi Dior

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On September 7, when Cardi B hurled her red stiletto at Nicki Minaj during a New York Fashion Week party hosted by *Harper's Bazaar*, years of rumors suggesting a rivalry between the two artists were confirmed. Ever since Cardi broke out with “Bodak Yellow,” which became 2017’s song of the summer, she seemed immediately confined to the role of challenger to Nicki’s throne. The resulting “Cardi or Nicki?” debate implied that only one could reign—not both. Everyone apparently wants to squeeze the two women onto a single pedestal to fight it out. And the fact that they’re women definitely matters—this competition is gendered, and if you want proof, ask yourself why nobody’s arguing that there’s only enough room in rap for one man to be a star.

As in many other forms of art, women in

music are primarily compared to other women and men primarily to other men. (Trans and nonbinary artists are only just starting to enter the mainstream discussion.) Look at awards ceremonies like the Oscars and the VMAs: Best Actor and Best Actress, Best Female Video and Best Male Video. Chicago-born rapper and R&B singer Akenya says this is one of her biggest complaints about her professional life:

“It doesn’t make any sense. If I’m a writer, if I’m an athlete, if I’m a singer—whatever. Whatever it is I do, what does my gender have to do with my ability to do it?” she explains. “When I see categories like ‘Best Male R&B’ versus ‘Best Female R&B’—OK, I guess the male and the female voice are different. There’s that. But it’s like, good singing is good singing. Why am I not your competition because I’m a woman? And it’s even more ➔

CHRIS D'ELIA



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continued from 34

ridiculous with rapping, because it's just talking—it's just words! Gender should have absolutely nothing to do with that."

Categorizing artists not just by genre but by gender unsurprisingly makes some of them feel limited. "The female this, the female that, is dehumanizing in and of itself," Akenya says. The gender binary certainly isn't a helpful tool to assess a musician's artistry, but because that binary so thoroughly saturates the music industry, you can't talk about the industry's problems without invoking it.

Hip-hop has always been male dominated. Though the number of women has increased over the years, they remain a small minority. This creates the perception that female artists must engage in "survival of the fittest" competition in order to secure one of a disproportionately limited number of spots. Chicago rapper Sisi Dior sums it up: "There can only be one queen, but there can be a whole lot of kings."

When Psalm One signed her first record deal in 2005, she was one of the only prominent women in Chicago hip-hop. In 2007, fellow Chicago rapper Kid Sister began to gain national attention with her single "Pro Nails" (thanks in part to a feature by Kanye West). Almost at once, Psalm started to see people trying to concoct some sort of tension between her and Kid Sister: "That was when the first kind of 'What do you think of Kid Sister?'—you know, 'How do you feel about her?'—people kind of like being in my ear about that," she says. "But I just remember that was the first time that it was made clear to me that as far as females go, a lot of people like one—there's not room for another, which is just ridiculous."

Of course, comparisons (and even imaginary rivalries) are visited upon male and female artists in every genre. But as Psalm One explains, this hurts women more due to their underrepresentation: "This is an age-old thing—what you're bringing up isn't new," she says. "There's been a Biggie and a Pac argument forever—who's better. There's been a Jay-Z versus Nas argument forever—who's better. There's even a Chance, Vic Mensa—who's better. I think it becomes a little different with females, because there's so few of us in comparison to males that it seems like it's hard for us to exist anyway—and then as soon as one gets too big, there's always another chick around the corner trying to bite your head off, as opposed to exploring and accepting the narrative of females who do work together."

T.R.U.T.H. of local duo Mother Nature agrees that competition in hip-hop expresses itself in different ways according to gender: "We still

work with a lot of male artists too, so we definitely see both sides, and I think there's more competition and competitive nature with the guys than the women. [But in male-to-male competition] it'll be about the actual music. With women, it's like, where's the music?" Her duo partner, Klevah, says she wouldn't even be bothered by the feud between Cardi and Nicki if it seemed to have anything to do with the actual content of their songs.

Chicago rapper Chimeka thinks part of the problem is that women in hip-hop are more likely to be judged on their image: "With male rappers, the audience is looking for a delivery, they're looking for the content, they're looking for a punch line and all these other kinds of stuff," she says. "With a girl rapper, the audience is looking for the style—it's more so built around the physical versus the idea."

Akenya agrees with Mother Nature that there's often more competition between male artists, just of a different kind. "I think men tend to be more competitive with each other in general. There's way more male beefs than there are female beefs historically. I just think the drama between women is amplified because we live in a patriarchal society. I think that men also tend to be more sensitive and have more fragile egos when it comes to that, actually."

A lot of people find feuds fun to watch, in a slowing-down-to-look-at-a-car-crash sort of way. Akenya thinks that men feuding is just as entertaining as women feuding (she mentions Drake and Meek Mill), but that feuds between women are often framed in an exploitive way: "People tend to trivialize, or it's portrayed in a certain light, when it's between two women," she says. "It's got this, 'Oh, look at those silly bitches over there' [aspect to it]."

Psalm One puts it more bluntly: "In a female-on-female feud, people get all excited because a titty might pop out."

So where did this idea come from that there can be only one female rap star at a time? "It's historically inaccurate," Akenya says. "There's a lot of historical, actual camaraderie and female empowerment in hip-hop. I don't quite know what changed that." She brings up the 1997 "Ladies Night" remix of Lil' Kim's "Not Tonight," which also features Lisa "Left Eye" Lopes, Da Brat, Angie Martinez, and Missy Elliott. "That's 20 years ago. I mean, the past 20 years—all of a sudden now we can only have one reigning woman in hip-hop at a time? It doesn't make any sense."

Chimeka also feels this manufactured tension between female hip-hop artists: "Post-90s era, there was no space for it to be multiple girls," she explains. "It went from being a multiwoman platform to it being only

Nicki. By nature everyone was like, 'That's the competition.'"

T.R.U.T.H. agrees: "If you look back to the 90s, there was a plethora of women artists out there at the same time with different styles, enjoying each other, celebrating one another."

By the time Nicki Minaj released her debut album, *Pink Friday*, in 2010, female representation in hip-hop had dropped sharply. The field may not have been exactly open for her, but it certainly wasn't crowded. "I think that Nicki Minaj in particular has created this for herself," says Klevah. "She does want to be the only one. She talks about it like 'I'm the queen'—she wants to be that."

Women remain a small minority in hip-hop. This creates the perception that female artists must engage in "survival of the fittest" competition in order to secure one of a disproportionately limited number of spots. Chicago rapper Sisi Dior sums it up: "There can only be one queen, but there can be a whole lot of kings."

Nicki's latest album is titled *Queen*, after all. She's included other women on every one of her albums (including Ariana Grande, Beyoncé, Jessie J, and Ciara), but they're all vocalists rather than rappers and thus less likely to step on her spotlight. The only track where Nicki appears with another female rapper is Migos' 2017 single "Motorsport," where she's preceded by a verse from Cardi B (surprise!). By contrast, Nicki has collaborated with nearly every male star in rap: Drake, Lil Wayne, Migos, Future, Meek Mill, Swae Lee, et cetera. Even that Migos appearance alongside Cardi was orchestrated by an all-male group.

"When I go back and listen to Missy Elliott's albums, you're also gonna hear men, but you're gonna hear women more," Klevah explains. Missy showcased guests such as Da Brat, Lil' Kim, Lil' Mo, M.I.A., Eve, and TLC. "She's always trying to bring in new women, like that was damn near her goal." Whether or not you believe Nicki Minaj has a responsibility to do something similar, there's no question that mainstream hip-hop would look different if she did.

In the Chicago scene, Chimeka says, women

tend to cooperate, using one another to grow. "I guess the competition exports us to growth," she says. "We need competition, because if there wasn't there wouldn't be multiple girls trying to do it. We needed to see one another to make it, like, 'Oh wow, we just created a world off each other.'"

Akenya agrees. "I think Chicago's community is pretty positive," she says. "Overall, there seems to be a lot of camaraderie. I can't really speak to if it's like that in other places, but it does feel rather unique [here]. And I would say that that translates between women in this community as well. There's not a lot of cattiness that I've observed. There's a lot of support."

The sisterhood and mutual support that Chimeka, Akenya, Mother Nature, and Psalm One all describe doesn't necessarily extend to the local hip-hop scene at large, though. Sisi Dior believes that Chicago's male-dominated community is especially dismissive of women rappers.

"I hear all the time, as far as my music, when a male will be like, 'I don't listen to female rappers at all, but you I could listen to!'" she explains. "They say it all the time. So some females don't even get a chance. A lot of guys won't even press play on a female rapper that they never heard of."

Chicago's hip-hop community may not pit female artists against one another the way the national industry does, but patriarchal assumptions continue to distort the way it's perceived. Chicago-born rapper Noname is rapidly becoming a national star, but media coverage seems insistent on placing her in the shadow of Chance the Rapper. "Like they cannot mention her name without mentioning this man," says Akenya, who's worked closely with Noname. "I think they believe that it's a compliment. And I think subconsciously they find that to be a way to validate her. Like her talent won't speak on its own."

Given that her career has already passed the 15-year mark, Psalm One doesn't expect change to happen quickly. "It still will take many many more female artists to break through to substantial places in the entertainment landscape," she says. "We still have a very long way to go." Akenya doesn't disagree, but like most artists in Chicago, she has faith in the city's community: "I think that a lot of us just support good music, period," she says. "We don't care what the subgenre is or what your gender is or any of that. It's like, is the quality of your art good? And I think Chicago is just a city that has a very high standard when it comes to art." 

 @maryk_blige

A Reader staffer shares three musical obsessions, then asks someone (who asks someone else) to take a turn.

IN ROTATION



Tierra Whack tries on many identities in her *Whack World* videos. 📷 TIERRA WHACK / YOUTUBE

JULIA HALE

Reader intern

Tierra Whack, *Whack World* Tierra Whack has been in my rotation since she released “Toe Jam” in 2015, but she confirmed me as a superfan in May with *Whack World*. The audiovisual album consists of 15 one-minute songs, each crammed with vivid imagery and accompanied by an equally vivid video. She supplements her animated flow with catchy choruses that she sings R&B style. Sometimes she’s self-consciously quirky—on “Fuck Off” she puts on an exaggerated southern accent—and sometimes she addresses serious topics, such as the death of a friend in “4 Wings” or suicidal thoughts in “Dr. Seuss.”

VanJess, *Silk Canvas* In July contemporary R&B duo VanJess, aka Nigerian-American sisters Ivana and Jessica Nwokike, released their debut album, *Silk Canvas*, putting a twist on the genre by incorporating dancehall and EDM. They layer soulful alto vocals over lively house-inspired beats on “Touch the Floor” (featuring Masego on sax), “Through Enough” (featuring a verse from GoldLink), and “Til Morning.” Meanwhile, slower songs such as “Filters” and “Addicted” seduce with intricate harmonies and impressive vocal ornaments.

Burna Boy I became a fan of Nigerian singer-songwriter Burna Boy in September, after he dropped the single “Gbona,” which pairs his deep baritone with a jazzy instrumental. When I explored his other work, one track caught my eye: “Heaven’s Gate” from the 2018 album *Outside*. It features UK pop singer Lily Allen, whose light, controlled harmonies layer perfectly over Burna Boy’s brisk, bouncy singing.

TATIANA HAZEL

Singer-songwriter, producer, and fashion designer

Girl K Chicago band Girl K are one of my favorites right now. I’m honestly shocked they haven’t received more attention. I discovered them because we were in the same Remezcla article about Latinx musicians from Chicago, and when I clicked on their video for “Division Club” I instantly had to listen to the full album, *Sunflower*

Court. Girl K obviously aren’t from the west coast, but they give me beach-rock vibes—it’s amazing.

Yaeji I found Korean-American electronic musician Yaeji through a series of YouTube recommended videos and was hooked by her song “Raingurl.” This New York-based artist produces her own music and also has a great DJ set. I went to a concert of hers at East Room earlier this year, and it was wonderful to see her in an intimate club setting.

M.I.A., *Arular* First of all, how is M.I.A. effortlessly bodying so many genres at once? Her debut album, *Arular*, came out in 2005, and I still often look to it for production inspira-

tion when I get stuck in the process of making a beat. I love how abstract the music can get while still maintaining structure. As good as M.I.A.’s later mainstream-appeal singles are (hello, “Paper Planes”), *Arular* has got to be my favorite album of hers.



Sara King 📷 COURTESY THE ARTIST



Kathy Patino of Girl K 📷 ALEXANDRIA DRAVILLAS

MELO MAKES MUSIC Recording artist, singer-songwriter, and producer

Jelani Aryeh, “Where We Go” A friend of mine recently sent me a track called “Where We Go” by this up-and-coming San Diego rapper and singer. I immediately fell for the lush but simple rock ‘n’ roll-inspired instrumental, and the songwriting kept me coming back. I definitely recommend people check it out!

Sara King, “Midsummer Night” If you enjoy atmospheric instrumentals and soothing vocals to match, then Dallas singer-songwriter Sara King needs to find her way onto your playlists. I really enjoy her song “Midsummer Night”—whenever I need to start my day with some dream pop, this is first on my list.

Kenny Hoopla, “Lost Cause” Kenny Hoopla is my most recent discovery and has been in heavy rotation ever since. The Milwaukee rapper just dropped the video for “Lost Cause,” which is the perfect blend of all my favorite genres! Don’t sleep on this—it’s so worth it.

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NOVEMBER 3	FIRST WARD PROBLEMS
NOVEMBER 4	THE HATE & THE HARVEST MIKE FELTEN 8:30 PM ANDREW D HUBER PROSPECT FOUR 9PM
NOVEMBER 5	JUST DUET
NOVEMBER 7	SPRINGBO WAGNER & MORSE 6PM FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
NOVEMBER 8	FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
NOVEMBER 9	STRAY BOLTS
NOVEMBER 11	HEISENBERG UNCERTAINTY PLAYERS
NOVEMBER 12	RC BIG BAND 7PM JON RARICK NONET 9PM
NOVEMBER 13	FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
NOVEMBER 14	ELIZABETH'S CRAZY LITTLE THING FEATURING FAKE BLIND DATE 9PM
NOVEMBER 15	KEITH SCOTT PALM GHOSTS

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WED 7	ALL NIGHT BOOGIE BAND <i>SideBar Jazz - NEW STANDARD QUINTET</i>	
THU 8	IRVING SCHOOL TRIVIA NIGHT FUNDRAISER <i>In the SideBar - James McCandless Tribute</i>	
FRI 9	Classic Rock Dance Party!	Expo '76 & The Total Pro Horns <i>In the SideBar - TOY ROBOTS & FRIENDS</i>
SAT 10	EDWARD DAVID ANDERSON w/special guest CHICAGO FARMER <i>In the SideBar - IAN LEITH</i>	

11/13 - Voicebox w/ Cathy Richardson
11/16 - Vanessa Davis Band 40th Anniversary Show
11/17 - Lucinda Williams (SOLD OUT)
11/21 - Black Wednesday w/ Terrapin Flyer
11/23 - Speed4Sarah Benefit
11/24 - The Zimmermen do Dylan w/Cathy Richardson
11/29 - Country Night In Berwyn
11/30 - American English
12/1 - Chris & Heather's Country Calendar Show
12/5 - Jon Dee Graham / Ben de la Cour
12/6 - Ron & Naomi's Christmas Special
12/8 - Mike Cooley
12/14 - Off Broadway
12/14 - Tish Hinojosa (SB)

PICK OF THE WEEK

Windhand deliver hypnotic, hook-driven doom on *Eternal Return*

**WINDHAND, SATAN'S SATYRS**

Wed 11/7, 9 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$15. 17+

DOING MY HOME state proud since 2008, Virginia grungy doom quartet **Windhand** have just released their fourth full-length, *Eternal Return* (Relapse), which follows their breakout album, 2015's *Grief's Infernal Flower*. It's their first without founding guitarist Asechiah Bogdan (also of Alabama Thunderpussy), but the band's no-frills wall of noise fills in the void just fine, because the focal point here is singer Dorthia Cottrell, who's been electrifying since the start—even while the band was still lurching into focus on its earliest

releases. On *Eternal Return*, Windhand's sharply honed sense of pacing keeps the ear eagerly following their quests, be they fuzzed-out groove riffing; clean, haunting balladry; or roiling psychedelic vehicles for Cottrell's rich wails. It's their hookiest album so far too, if I may use that word. Also on the bill are fellow Virginians **Satan's Satyrs**, who released a split EP with Windhand earlier this year and just dropped a new album, *The Lucky Ones*; their retro sleaze-metal is a dirty-pleasure delight. —MONICA KENDRICK

THURSDAY¹

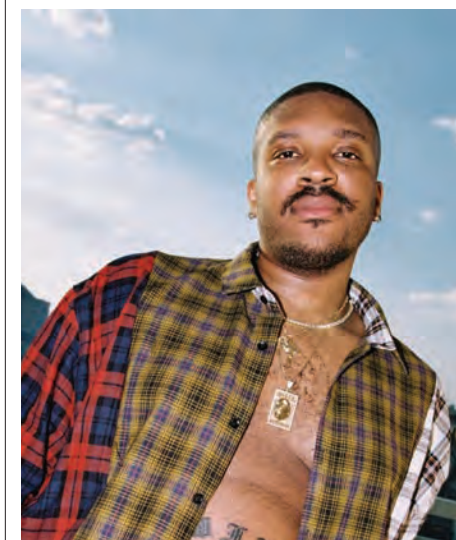
EXPLODED VIEW *Forma and Gentle Leader XIV* open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$14, \$12 in advance. 21+

Exploded View write many components of their songs to sound as though they're falling away at a far distance. The trio's sparse rhythms and fluttering electronics often melt so deep into the backgrounds of their tracks that you feel left with no other choice but to try and follow their post-punk- and industrial-influenced noise down whichever rabbit holes they've fallen into. Thankfully, there's the limber voice of Annika Henderson—half rapturous, half mad—to tentatively guide you through the switchbacks. On their new full-length, September's *Obey* (Sacred Bones), Exploded View blend a soaring, humming single such as "Sleepers" with a drilling, propulsive track such as closer "Rant" without losing their focus on designing a soundscape that simultaneously comes across like it's on fire and in bloom. Good luck trying to find your way out of their explorations—though you might never want to leave. —KEVIN WARWICK

FRIDAY²

FATHER *Lil House Phone, Danger Incorporated, and Mally Raw* open. 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 2105 S. State, \$25, \$20 in advance. 18+

In 2014 the world was introduced to Atlanta's Father with "Look at Wrist," a collaboration with Drake protege iLoveMakonnen on which the former's twisted lyrics and deadpan delivery served as foils to the latter's drugged-out chill. Father has since managed to make himself stand out from the trippy mumble-trap scene with an obtuse, highly lyrical



Father © COURTESY THE ARTIST



Tasha
 © GRACE COUDAL

take on the genre, proving himself to be equal parts smart, weird, and straight-up catchy. On September's *Awful Swim*, a joint release between Adult Swim and his own Awful Records, Father hit his stride, his hyperactive, nasal drawl taking on minimal psychedelic beats with topsy-turvy, spitfire word-play and storytelling lyrics about the dark sides of the party lifestyle. This has been a prolific year for hip-hop, with new mixtapes and surprise albums seemingly coming out every week. But even in the newly saturated market of 2018, *Awful Swim* offers a smarter, sharper take on it all than you'll find from anyone else. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

TASHA Yarrow, Jamila Woods, Kara Jackson, and J Bambii open. 9:30 PM, *Sleeping Village*, 3734 W. Belmont, \$13, \$11 in advance. 21+

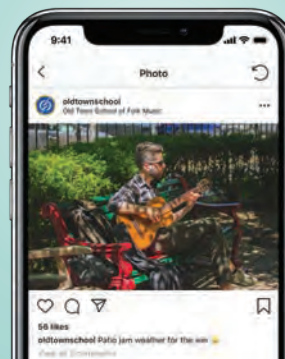
Chicago singer, songwriter, poet, and activist Tasha Viets-VanLear knows the personal is political—though there's not much of a chance to completely sidestep politics when you're a young, queer woman of color. On her new debut album, *Alone at Last* (Father/Daughter), Tasha acknowledges the machinations of society that inflict cruelty on people who have stories similar to hers, and her gentle, resplendent songs are a salve for those who struggle to find space to be themselves. On her Facebook page, Tasha calls her work "radical softness," and last year she told *Chicago* magazine she'd considered calling her then-forthcoming album "Bedtime": "A lot of my recent writing has been centered around my bedroom, and the self-reflection and self-healing that has to do with my

bed. It's a very holy place for me." She treats her art as sacred too. The tender instrumentals on *Alone at Last* are played at a hushed volume, as if to suggest that Tasha's lyrics are confidential pieces she's chosen to share with care for herself as well as for us. Tonight she celebrates the album's release at *Sleeping Village* with a mixture of poetry and musical performances. On vinyl the record comes with a poetry zine with pieces from Tasha, Kara Jackson, Keisa Reynolds, Stella Binion, Imani Jackson, and Jamila Woods; a dollar from the sale of each record will benefit the No Cop Academy collective. —**LEOR GALIL**

JAMES BLOOD ULMER 8:30 PM, *Constellation*, 3111 N. Western, \$30. 18+

James Blood Ulmer is quite an exceptional musician. As the first guitarist to play with legendary jazz saxophonist Ornette Coleman in the 1970s, he adapted harmolodics, Coleman's pioneering style of free jazz, for the six strings and came up with an angular style with a surprisingly long-distance reach. Soon he'd stepped out as a bandleader on his own, and in the early 80s his Columbia albums—particularly 1982's *Black Rock*—briefly caught on at the outer reaches of the new-wave scene. In the 2000s, he turned to his blues roots, looking back to the start of his career in the 60s on albums such as 2001's *Memphis Blood* (recorded at Sun Studios in Memphis, where so much classic blues and rockabilly was captured in the 1950s) and 2005's *Birthright*. Through the years, his music—depending on the album—may have ➔

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- 2/16 John McCutcheon
- 3/30 Peter Himmelman

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 In Szold Hall

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 8 7:30PM

Pieta Brown / David Huckfelt (The Pines)

In Szold Hall

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9 8PM

Stelios Petrakis Quartet

In Szold Hall

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10 8PM

Simon Shaheen In Szold Hall

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25 3:30PM

The Nut Tapper Christmas Show

Kids concert

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30 8PM

Bob Schneider

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2 7PM

On Big Shoulders

Album Release Show

featuring Matt Brown, Steve Dawson, Brian Wilkie, Aaron Smith, Gerald Dowd, Liz Chidester, Liam Davis, Elise Bergman, Anna Jacobson, Evan Jacobson and Keely Vasquez

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1 8PM

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Buke & Gase  BUKE & GASE

continued from 39

fit well into the no-wave and blues genres, but it's always borne the distinctive mark of harmonolodics that refused to let his sound fade into the background. Ulmer's most recent album, last year's *Baby Talk* (Trost), was recorded live at the Molde International Jazz Festival in Europe. Backed by a band called the Thing (with saxophonist Mats Gustafsson), he's heard here in full-on avant-jazz mode with plenty of space for his guitar to wail.

—JAMES PORTER

band's inner St. Vincent, with Dyer layering a poly-rhythmic refrain over a 4/4 pop beat, a deep synth groove, and funky horn stabs. A live performance from Dyer and Sanchez—the latter of whom has designed instruments for Blue Man Group and the National's Bryce Dessner—is always captivating, and it will be exciting to hear where they're heading next. —SCOTT MORROW

RICH JONES *Leaf Set, Shawnee Dez, and Mmuso open. 9 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$15, \$13 in advance. 21+*

SATURDAY3

BUKE & GASE *Joan of Arc opens. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$12. 21+*

Named after their signature homemade instruments—the buke, a six-string baritone ukulele, and the gase, a guitar-bass hybrid—Buke & Gase blend quirky indie rock, off-kilter time signatures, and the powerful voice of singer Arone Dyer to create a truly unique sound. The New York-based two-piece have been relatively silent since releasing their 2013 LP *General Dome* on Brassland. But on the heels of a 2017 EP, *Aron vs. Aron*, and three new singles (which trend poppier than their previous work while staying progressive), Dyer and partner Aron Sanchez are touring the States in advance of a new full-length, *Scholars*, on the way in January. The two have spent the time off reinventing their group: crafting new sounds and ways to implement them, distancing themselves from their namesake instruments, and adding electronics and different ways to trigger percussion and harmonize vocals. If their latest single, “Derby,” is any indication, fans are in for a treat. The two-and-a-half-minute tune channels the

In the past few years Chicago rapper-singer Rich Jones has increasingly softened his delivery and drawn out his vocals. These days, it can be difficult to trace the strains of rap DNA that remain crucial to his work, but they're still there in the way he paces himself, the way he ends each verse with verve, and the way his singing is inflected with a swagger that suggests he could turn and rattle off 12 bars on a dime. He's not trying to be the greatest singer in the world; he's figuring out the best way to wring out every emotion within his vocal capabilities. On his new self-released album, *The Shoulder You Lean On*, he pulls off the task with a nonchalant poise, showing he's able to stir up sweet melancholy, sanguine sensuality, and effervescent joy, often in a single song, without ruffling mellow flow. Producer J. Kelr (of Blended Babies) gave *The Shoulder You Lean On* a relaxed soul sound. The record carries a sense that Kelr evolved it over the course of several decades, which makes Jones sound more seasoned by proxy. The album is definitive of Chicago hip-hop, but I imagine it could go over well in circles obsessed with boogie's new twist on throwback postdisco dance music—what *The Shoulder You Lean On* lacks in synthesizer melodies, Jones makes up for in everyman smoothness. —LEOR GALIL



Rich Jones
KATIE LEVINE

ALAN LICHT 8 PM, Bond Chapel, 1050 E. 59th, free with RSVP at [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com).

Alan Licht's recording career stretches back to 1990, when he appeared on two seven-inch EPs by the group Love Child. One was a collection of cute, bouncy songs cleaved by Licht's volcanic guitar solos; the other was a set of lo-fi but respectful covers of pieces by the sui generis composer Moondog. In the years since, he's been stepping over boundaries like they shouldn't be there in the first place, collaborating with equally adventurous musicians including cosmic jazz man (and former Chicagoan) Rob Mazurek, cassette-reliant sound artist Aki Onda, outsider guitarist Loren Connors, and Yeah Yeah Yeahs drummer Brian Chase. And as an author whose published work includes art-catalog essays, profiles of underappreciated minimalists, and a book about tidal changes in pop culture titled *Sound Art*:

Beyond Music, Between Categories, he has also explained how he does it; while he's keenly aware of the methods and mores of whatever genre he's operating in, he hears everything as rock music and approaches it from that direction. In 2015 Licht put aside the electric guitar, his main instrument throughout his career, to make an acoustic LP. The pieces on *Currents* (VDSQ/Thin Wrist) are brisk, songlike solos with a pithiness that's at odds with the side-long excursions on his other albums under his own name. Licht will return to the electric guitar and long-form composition for a new, unnamed piece that will form the bulk of his concert at Bond Chapel, but it will build on the strumming techniques and repetitive structures of his acoustic music as well as incorporate some extrapolations from the Stooges' "1970," which he played on the *Currents* tour. —BILL MEYER →



Alan Licht
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12/01 VNV NATION

12/02 30H13 AND EMO NITE

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12/07 OMAR APOLLO

12/08 EVE 6

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 FADE / FERN / JAMES KAHIL / AFTERSOUND

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11.05 KORPIKLAANI & ARKONA
 SIQUM

11.06 WAVVES / BEACH FOSSILS
 KEVIN KRAUTER

11.07 BEACH FOSSILS / WAVVES
 KEVIN KRAUTER

RIOT FEST PRESENTS
11.08 ANTARCTIGO VESPUCCI
 KATIE ELLEN / TELETHON

11.09 LIKE MOTHS TO FLAMES
 OCEANS ATE ALASKA / PHINEHAS NOVELISTS / QUALIA

11.11 DEVILDRIVER
 JINJER / RAVEN BLACK / TANZEN / CONTRA

11.16 HANDS LIKE HOUSES
 EMAROSA / DEVOUR THE DAY
 THE FAIM / ARLINGTON

11.18 DANNY WORSNOP
 FACE THE FIRE / BRANDON VON VACIK

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11.23 THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA
 FIT FOR A KING / '68

11.24 BAYSIDE (ACOUSTIC)
 KAYLEIGH GOLDSWORTHY

11.25 SABRINA BENAIM
 CLEMENTINE VON RADICS

SILVER WRAPPER PRESENTS
11.30 KEYS N KRATES

12.03 ALUNAGEORGE

RIOT FEST PRESENTS
12.07 TROPHY EYES & SEAWAY
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12.09 BROTHER ALI

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12.12 ROOSEVELT

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12.20 THE AUDITION

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MUSIC

continued from 41

SHECK WES *Part of the Red Bull Music Festival. Nas headlines; Pusha T, Teyana Taylor, Valee, Sheck Wes, Desiigner, and O7O Shake open. 8 PM, Wintrust Arena, 200 E. Cermak, \$22.*

Harlem rapper Sheck Wes became one of rap's biggest rookies this year thanks to the sleeper hit "Mo Bamba," a rager about his childhood friend Mohamed "Mo" Bamba, the Orlando Magic center. Sheck released it in 2017, one of the few early cuts that showcase the volcanic energy that eventually made him a breakout name. But he doesn't share the enthusiasm of his growing fan base for one of those songs: "I hate 'Live Sheck Wes,'" he told Pitchfork in July. "People get lost in the energy and not my message. I'm talking about some shit!" He's right, and not just in the case of that track, on which he raps about growing up in Harlem's Saint Nicholas Homes projects. To hear what he's trying to convey, you just need to get past the screamed verses and blaring and sparse instrumentals. You also need to ignore the Big Hype—including the cheerleading from Kanye, who signed Sheck to GOOD Music this year, and Travis Scott, who signed Sheck to his Cactus Jack label last year. (Scott's mammoth recent *Astroworld* also includes Sheck, and on the new single "Sicko Mode" Drake references Sheck.) On "Jiggy on the Shits," from

Sheck's debut album, October's *Mudboy* (GOOD/Cactus Jack/Interscope), there's also language to consider: he raps in Wolof, the native tongue of his Senegalese parents. At age 17, his mother sent him from his home in the U.S. to Touba in central Senegal to study Islam, and the song is as much homage to his roots as it is testimony to the teenage rebelliousness that convinced her to send him abroad. Sheck's fury keeps *Mudboy* afloat through its most bloated moments, and it can be a distraction, particularly when it comes to his favorite shouted ad lib: "bitch." Sheck litters *Mudboy* with the word, which he suggests he doesn't use derogatorily on "Gmail." But sometimes he screams it with a hint of mischievousness that suggests he knows he's crossing a line, and he's OK with letting listeners sort out the gray area for themselves. —LEOR GALIL

SUNDAY4

PAUL METZGER *John Saint Pelvyn opens. 8 PM, Elastic, 3429 W. Diversey, \$10.*

We're all looking for transcendence in some way, and Minneapolis's Paul Metzger is searching for it through exploring his self-modified 23-string



Sheck Wes COURTESY THE ARTIST

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banjo. From Western art song and Appalachian appropriations to the somber droning of 20th-century and Indian classical music, Metzger manages to assimilate an ungainly swath of influences in his extended improvisations. His deconstructionist nature, a character trait he perhaps shares with hillbilly-music player Henry Flynt, sets him within a lineage of certifiable eccentrics who tug at the histories of performance and instrument making. Occasionally, Metzger takes up the guitar, but it's so thoroughly detuned that it's tough to settle the work within the bounds of conventional guitar music; on "Meend for Shaista," a cut from *1300*, his most recent album, he also outfits the instrument with a cymbal. On the 20-minute banjo rumination that follows it, "Death's Other Kingdom," he prods long lines out of his self-made contraption, momentarily lulling listeners into mild sedation before swinging around and playing staccato over an expanded melody. Those brave enough to engage with Metzger's wildly broad improvisations might not be rewarded with a moment of sudden enlightenment, but taking in the sounds of these careening, vibrating strings likely will boost a listener's appreciation for the endless possibilities available to any intuitive performer or artist. —**DAVE CANTOR**



ODONIS ODONIS *Grun Wasser and Anatomy of Habit* open. 8:30 PM, *Empty Bottle*, 1035 N. Western, \$10. 21+

When Toronto trio Odonis Odonis emerged with their 2011 debut LP, *Hollandaze*—a blast of fried,

buzz-sawed Jesus-and-Mary-Chain-worshipping surf-gaze—their harsh, distortion-drenched punk fit in nicely with the city's thriving noise-rock explosion, which brought the world bands such as Metz and Greys. If you had told me then that by 2017 the guys in Odonis Odonis would release an album of full-on industrial dance music, I'd have been quite

Odonis Odonis
 © SERGEY SAFRONOV

surprised. But here we are: on last year's *No Pop* (Felte), Odonis Odonis show they've become experts in the genre. Driven entirely by pounding drum machines, creepy samplers, and devastatingly heavy synths, *No Pop* is full of songs that add complex rhythms and dank, eerie moods to four-on-the-floor industrial beats. Despite those intricate leanings, my favorite parts of *No Pop* are when the band goes for it in the most straightforward way, channeling 90s pop-industrial greats (Nine Inch Nails, Marilyn Manson) and adding huge hooks and a dose of silly sass to their electronic darkness. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

WEDNESDAY7

WINDHAND, SATAN'S SATYRS See *Pick of the Week*, page 38. 9 PM, *Subterranean*, 2011 W. North, \$15. 17+

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11.6 PETER ASHER & JEREMY CLYDE
11.15 JOE HENRY WITH CLARENCE BUCARO
11.20-21 J MASCIS (OF DINOSAUR JR.)

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ELIANE ELIAS
A BRAZILIAN JOURNEY

11.14

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11.10-11 JOHN HIATT
11.12 CONYA DOSS
11.18 JON MCLAUGHLIN & MATT WERTZ
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11.19 THE EXPENDABLES
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 (OF UMPHREY'S MCGEE)
11.24-25 BODEANS
11.26 ANTHONY DAVID THE SONGS OF BILL WITHERS
11.27 POKEY LAFARGE
11.28 CANNED HEAT
11.29 DWELE
11.30 JANE LYNCH "A SWINGIN' LITTLE CHRISTMAS"
12.1 ANDREW RIPP & FRIENDS
12.2 JENNIFER KNAPP & MARGARET BECKER
 "HYMNS OF CHRISTMAS"
12.3 DAVE HOLLISTER
12.4 KRIS ALLEN - SOMETHIN' ABOUT CHRISTMAS
12.5 JOE PUG
12.6 THE EMPTY POCKETS HOLIDAY CONCERT

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How to get your groove back after giving birth

A pelvic floor physical therapist comes to the rescue. Plus: try, try again

Q: I'm a 40-year-old married straight woman. I gave birth to our first kid in 2015 and our second earlier this year. My perineum tore and was stitched both times. I have not been able to have sex with penetration since having our second child. My OB/GYN said I'm "a little tighter now" due to the way the stitching was performed. My husband is very well endowed, and I can't imagine how on earth I'm ever going to get that thing back in me, let alone enjoy it. We have a history of pretty hot sex, and I really miss it. I've been searching online for some sex toys to help me. I've never used sex toys before. I've always been able to have thrilling orgasms easily without any devices. I still can with manual stimulation. But I want to have sex with my husband. I'm confused and I just don't know what I need to help me open back up and get through the pain. Please help! — **THANKS IN ADVANCE**

A: "Unfortunately, this situation is very common—but luckily there are options to help her get her groove back," said Rachel Gelman, a pelvic floor physical therapist at the Pelvic Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Also sadly common: ob-gyns shrugging off concerns like yours, TIA.

"I see that all the time," said Gelman. "Part of the problem is that the pelvic floor/muscles aren't on most doctor's radar. That's due to many factors—cough, cough, insurance companies, cough, our dysfunctional health care system, cough—but to water it down, it's the ob-gyn's job to get someone through pregnancy and deliver a healthy baby. And when that's accomplished, the feeling is their job is done."

But so long as you're not able to have and enjoy PIV sex with your hung husband, TIA, there's still work to do.

"TIA needs to see a pelvic floor physical therapist," said Gelman. "A good PT would be able to assess and treat any pelvic floor dysfunction, which is often the primary cause or a contributing factor for anyone experiencing pain with sex, especially after childbirth. Labor and delivery can have a significant impact on the pelvic floor muscles, which can cause a myriad of symptoms," said Gelman—and pain during PIV sex sits high on the list of those symptoms.

"A pelvic floor specialist can also instruct her in a home program, which may include stretches, relaxation techniques, and dilators—dilators are graduated cylinders that are inserted vaginally to help stretch the vaginal opening and promote relaxation of the

pelvic floor."

A set of "graduated cylinders" is essentially a bouquet of dildos," TIA. You start with the smallest dilator/dildo, inserting it every day until you can insert it without any pain or discomfort, and then you "graduate" to the next "cylinder" (wink, wink), and so forth.

You can order a set of dilators online, TIA, but Gelman wants you to find a doc that specializes in sexual medicine first: "The websites of the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health (ISSWSH), the International Society for Sexual Medicine (ISSM) and the International Pelvic Pain Society (IPPS) are where she should start."

Q: I'm a 30-year-old woman, and about a year ago I started taking improv classes to help combat my social anxiety. I met a lot of awesome people in my class, but I took a particular shine to this one guy. He was a gentle soul, very sweet, and really funny. We quickly became friends. Eventually I developed feelings for him and asked him out. He appreciated the offer but told me that he was gay. I was shocked and disappointed, but I wanted to keep our friendship so I tried to get over my feelings. But not only haven't these feelings gone away, I'm actually falling in love with him. This is such a mess. I found this wonderful guy who I care about and yet nothing will ever happen because I was born the wrong gender. What can I do?!?—**INTROVERT MAKES PASS, REGRETS OVERTURE VERY SERIOUSLY**

A: Nothing.

You can't make that gay guy fall in love with you, IMPROVS, any more than I could make Hasan Minhaj fall in love with me. Getting over him is your only option, and that's gonna take some time and most likely some space, too. (I'd recommend seeing less of your crush after this class ends.) But give yourself some credit for doing something proactive about your social anxiety, for taking a risk, and for

asking your classmate out. The takeaway here isn't "It didn't work with him so why should I bother ever trying again with someone else?" but "I did it—I made a connection, I asked someone out—and I'm going to do it again, and hopefully it'll work out next time." **RS**

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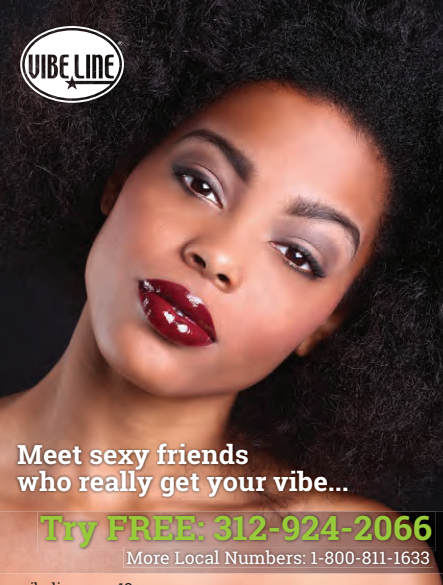
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Tatsu Aoki, Hamid Drake, and Michael Zerang 12/21, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Big Wild 3/22, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 18+
Boy Harsher 2/8, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Jacob Collier 3/5, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Christopher Cross 3/19-20, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 11/1, noon
Dead Horses, Brother Brothers 2/1, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 11/2, 8 AM
Direct Hit!, Copyrights 1/26, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Drama 12/22, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Faceless, Rings of Saturn, the Last Ten Seconds of Life 12/7, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Ms. Lisa Fischer & Grand Baton 2/4-5, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 11/1, noon
Fouk! 11/30, 10 PM, Virgin Hotel
Marty Friedman 2/13, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Robbie Fuks & Linda Gail Lewis 2/23, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Gnash 1/26, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Green Velvet, Solardo 12/29, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 18+
Gryffin 2/9, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Guster, Sainsteneca 4/13, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 11/2, noon, 18+
Haelos 3/28, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Peter Himmelman 3/30, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 11/2, 8 AM
Hot Sardines 1/23, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 11/1, noon
George Kahumoku Jr., Nathan Aweau, and Kawika Kahiapo 2/9, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 11/2, 8 AM
Kiss 3/2, 7:30 PM, United Center, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Mark Knopfler 9/1, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Kooks 2/21, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 18+
MadeinTYO 3/1, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Cass McCombs 3/16, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 18+
John McCutcheon 2/5, 5 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 11/2, 8 AM
Jane Monheit 2/9, 7 and 9:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Dallas Moore Band 3/29, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint
Bob Mould Band 2/22-23, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Peter Murphy 2/22, 7:30 PM, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Perfume 4/5, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, on sale Fri 11/2, 11 AM
Queensryche, Fates Warning 3/14, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 17+
Queers 12/31, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 18+
Rebirth Brass Band 1/18, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 17+
Royal Trux 2/22, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Trapper Schoepp 1/25, 9 PM, Hideout
Leni Stern Trio 2/28, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Suicide Machines, Goddamn Gallows 12/28, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM, 17+
Think Floyd USA 1/26, 8 PM, Park West, 18+
Uncle Acid & the Deadbeats, Graveyard 3/26, 7 PM, Metro, 18+
We Banjo 3/31, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 11/1, noon
You Me at Six 3/2, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 11/2, 10 AM
Thalia Zedek 12/13, 9 PM, Hideout

UPCOMING

All Time Low 12/21, 7:30 PM, House of Blues
Antarctigo Vespucci, Katie Ellen 11/8, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge
Aurora, Talos 3/1, 7:30 PM, Metro
Band of Friends 11/23, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Behemoth, At the Gates, Wolves in the Throne Room 11/9, 7:30 PM, House of Blues, 17+
Brand X 12/8, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Bronze Radio Return 3/15, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Bully 12/31, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Bunbury 3/20, 8 PM, House of Blues, 17+
John Butler Trio 11/29, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Buxton 12/6, 9 PM, Hideout
Caamp 12/7, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Cannabis Corpse 12/10, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Mariah Carey 3/11, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Cloud Nothings, Courtneys 12/14, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
A Collaboration Between Uniform and the Body 11/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Dawes 1/29, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Disturbed, Three Days Grace 3/8, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Dodos, Palehound 11/11, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Roky Erickson 11/9, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall
Flasher 12/4, 9 PM, Hideout
Four Fists 11/16, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Oliver Francis 12/7, 10 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Get Up Kids, Remember Sports 11/10, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Freddie Gibbs 11/16, 7 PM, Park West
Goatwhore, Casualties, Black Tusk 11/21, 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Grapetooth 11/11, 7 PM, Thalia Hall
Helio Sequence 11/28, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Interpol 2/7, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Kimbra 12/5, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Kodaline 11/27, 6:30 PM, House of Blues
John Legend 12/13, 7 PM, Lyric Opera House
Low 11/16, 7:30 PM, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel
Nick Lowe with Los Strait-jackets 12/31, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Jeff Lynne's ELO 6/27, 8 PM, United Center
Macabre 12/22, 6:30 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Stephen Malkmus & the Jicks 1/23, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Misfits, Fear, Venom Inc. 4/27, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Muncie Girls 11/11, 6:30 PM, Cobra Lounge
Municipal Waste 11/15, 7 PM, Metro, 18+
Matt Nathanson 3/9, 8 PM, Thalia Hall
Novo Amor 11/23, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Nnamdi Ogbonnaya & Sen Morimoto 11/9, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Pale Waves, Candescent 11/21, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge
Paper Kites 11/21, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Parquet Courts 12/3, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+
Peter, Bjorn & John 12/5, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Post Animal 12/15, 8 PM, Metro
Preoccupations, Protomartyr 12/6, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Never miss a show again. Sign up for the newsletter at chicagoreader.com/early

Procol Harum 2/20-21, 8 PM, City Winery
Chris Robinson Brotherhood 1/25, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Saba 11/24, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall
Cody Simpson 11/16, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Snail Mail 1/17, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Soft Moon 1/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Switchfoot, Colony House 3/8-9, 6:30 PM, Park West
Teenage Fanclub 3/6, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+
Sharon Van Etten 2/14, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Ryley Walker 12/28, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Wild Nothing 11/9, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
With Confidence, Broadside 12/6, 6 PM, Bottom Lounge
Adrian Young 12/16, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Yowler 11/18, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

SOLD OUT

Alkaline Trio 1/4-6, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Cavetown 12/8, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge
Elvis Costello & the Imposters 11/14, 8 PM, the Vic
Cupcakke, DJ Funk, DJ King Marie 11/10, 9 PM, Thalia Hall
Every Time I Die, Turnstile 11/12, 6 PM, Metro
Laura Jane Grace & the Devouring Mothers 11/8, 8 PM, Hideout
Conan Gray 11/13, 7 PM, Schubas
Greta Van Fleet 12/12, 7 PM and 12/14-15, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom
Beth Hart 4/25, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+
Jim James, Alynda Segarra 11/9, 7:30 PM, the Vic
Lil Suzy 11/10, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall
Ella Mai 3/3, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Andy Shauf 11/29-30, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Tenacious D 11/13-14, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Jack White 11/19, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+
Lucinda Williams 11/17, 8 PM, Fitzgerald's, Berwyn, Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry Benefit
Thom Yorke 12/4, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

CHICAGO HIP-HOP SITE Ruby Hornet hasn't thrown a show in a few years, but the drought ends Wednesday, November 7, with a blowout at the **Empty Bottle**. Producer **Boathouse** and rapper **Ajani Jones** coheadline, performing new songs they've recorded together as well as solo material. Both artists release music through **Closed Sessions**, the label cofounded by DJ and writer Alex Fruchter (aka **RTC**), who bought Ruby Hornet last fall—he'd previously served as the site's editor, but left in 2013 to focus on Closed Sessions. Colorful Milwaukee MC **Lorde Fredd33** and Chicago rapper-crooner **Jared Lanell** open the show.

Gossip Wolf has a soft spot for tiny local indie-rock tape label **Worry Records**, whose roster includes charmers such as Rust Ring, Retirement Party, and Regular Oatmeal. This week Worry drops the debut of bass-free Chicago trio **Mollow**, the EP **Small**—its gritty, salt-of-the-earth emo is right at home in the Worry catalog. On Friday, November 2, Mollow headline **Subterranean** downstairs, with openers Sad Witches, Good Brother, and Bloodsport: the Movie, the Band (no relation to Jean-Claude Van Damme).

There are many ways to celebrate **Día de los Muertos**—the Mexican holiday that honors departed loved ones with spirited partying—but the **Calaveras y Palmeras** bash on Friday, November 2, at **Co-Prosperity Sphere** promises a packed and percolating dance floor. **Lumpen Radio** and DJ collective **Sonorama** host, and they've booked megatalented deep-cut experts to spin vintage Latinx music, among them **Sonido Gallo Negro's Julian Donk, Peace & Rhythm** label cofounder **DJ Bongohead**, and **DJ Garrincha** of **Tropical Diaspora Records**. The event also includes seasonally appropriate face painting, an on-site marketplace, and food and drink from Marz Community Brewing and Sobremesa Supper Club—though the \$10 admission fee doesn't cover all that! —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

3/2 Pures

MUSIC PAIRED WITH BEER

SHANNON AND THE CLAMS
THALIA HALL 10/31

TRISTEN
GMAN TAVERN 11/2

NNAMDI OGBONNAYA / SEN MORIMOTO
EMPTY BOTTLE 11/9

CAIRO GANG
THE HIDEOUT 11/14

RUSSIAN CIRCLES / BONGRIPPER
METRO 11/23

HAR MAR SUPERSTAR / SABRINA ELLIS
"DO THE SONGS OF DIRTY DANCING"
THALIA HALL 11/24

FLASHER
THE HIDEOUT 12/4

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PRESENTS



**SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 4
VIC THEATRE**

For your chance to win tickets and VIP passes to meet Violent Femmes courtesy of Coors Light go to one of these locations this Friday, Nov. 2

Nisei Lounge
3439 N Sheffield Ave.
8:00pm to 10:00pm
\$4 Coors Light

Lizard's Liquid Lounge
3058 W Irving Park Rd.
8:00pm to 10:00pm
\$3 Coors Light

Irish Times
8869 Burlington Ave. Brookfield
9:00pm to 11:00pm
\$4 Coors Light Drafts

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FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 9
PARK WEST



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